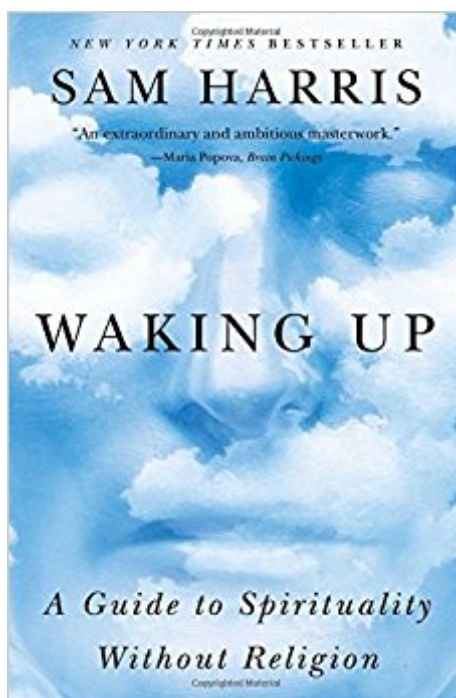


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Waking Up: A Guide To Spirituality Without Religion



Synopsis

For the millions of Americans who want spirituality without religion, Sam Harris's latest New York Times bestseller is a guide to meditation as a rational practice informed by neuroscience and psychology. From Sam Harris, neuroscientist and author of numerous New York Times bestselling books, *Waking Up* is for the twenty percent of Americans who follow no religion but who suspect that important truths can be found in the experiences of such figures as Jesus, the Buddha, Lao Tzu, Rumi, and the other saints and sages of history. Throughout this book, Harris argues that there is more to understanding reality than science and secular culture generally allow, and that how we pay attention to the present moment largely determines the quality of our lives. *Waking Up* is part memoir and part exploration of the scientific underpinnings of spirituality. No other book marries contemplative wisdom and modern science in this way, and no author other than Sam Harris—a scientist, philosopher, and famous skeptic—could write it.

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Customer Reviews

"Harris's book . . . caught my eye because it's so entirely of this moment, so keenly in touch with the growing number of Americans who are willing to say that they do not find the succor they crave, or a truth that makes sense to them, in organized religion." (Frank Bruni, columnist, New York Times) "The fact is that *Waking Up* lends a different picture of Harris (at least to me): an intelligent and sensitive person who is willing to undergo the discomfort involved in proposing alternatives to the religions he's spent years degrading. His new book, whether discussing the poverty of spiritual language, the neurophysiology of consciousness,

psychedelic experience, or the quandaries of the self, at the very least acknowledges the potency and importance of the religious impulse—though Harris might name it differently—that fundamental and common instinct to seek not just an answer to life, but a way to live that answer. (Trevor Quirk, *The New Republic*) "[A]n extraordinary and ambitious masterwork. . . . altogether spectacular." (Maria Popova, *Brainpickings*) "Uber-atheist Sam Harris is getting all spiritual. In his new book, *Waking Up: A Guide to Spirituality Without Religion*, the usually outspoken critic of religion describes how spirituality can and must be divorced from religion if the human mind is to reach its full potential. . . . But there is plenty in *Waking Up* that will delight Harris—,ç most militant atheist readers. (Religion News Service) "The great value and novelty of this book is that Harris, in a simple but rigorous style, takes the middle way between these pseudoscientific and pseudo-spiritual assertions . . . [leading] to a profoundly more salubrious life. (Publishers Weekly) "A demanding, illusion-shattering book. (Kirkus Reviews) "Don't read *Waking Up* . . . if you want to be told that heaven is real. Do read it if you want to explore the nature of consciousness, to learn how just trying to be mindful can free you from anxiety and self-blame. (MORE Magazine) "Waking Up is an eye opening, mind expanding book. (AA Agnostica) "A seeker's memoir, a scientific and philosophical exploration of the self, and a how-to guide for transcendence, > explores the nature of consciousness, explains how to meditate, tells you the best drugs to take, and warns you about lecherous gurus. It will shake up your most fundamental beliefs about everyday experience, and it just might change your life. (Paul Bloom, Professor of Psychology and Cognitive Science, Yale University and author of "Just Babies: The Origins of Good and Evil") "Waking Up is a rigorous, kind, clear, and witty book that will point you toward the selflessness that is our original nature. (Stephen Mitchell) "Sam Harris points out the rational methodology for exploring the nature of consciousness and for experiencing a transformative understanding of possibilities. *Waking Up* really does help us wake up. (Joseph Goldstein, author of "Mindfulness: A Practical Guide to Awakening" and "One Dharma") "As a neuroscientist, Sam Harris shows how our egos are illusions, diffuse products of brain activity, and as a long-term practitioner of meditation, he shows how abandoning this illusion can wake us up to a richer life, more connected to everything around us. (Jerry Coyne, Professor of Biology at the University of Chicago and author of "Why Evolution is True") "Sam Harris ranks as my favorite skeptic, bar none. In *Waking Up* he gives us a clear-headed, no-holds-barred look at the spiritual supermarket, calling out what amounts to junk food and showing us where real nutrition can be found. Anyone who realizes the value of a spiritual

life will find much to savor here. And those who see no value in it will find much to reflect on." (Daniel Goleman, author *Emotional Intelligence and Focus*) "Sam Harris has written a beautifully rational book about spirituality, consciousness and transcendence. He is the high priest of spirituality without religion. I recommend this book regardless of your belief system. As befits a book called *Waking Up*, it's an eye opener." (A.J. Jacobs, bestselling author of *The Year of Living Biblically*)

Praise for *Free Will*: Publishers Weekly Top 10 Science Book of Spring 2012

"A nimble book, amiably and conversationally jumping from point to point. The book's length is one of its charms: He never belabors any one topic or idea, sticking around exactly as long as he needs to in order to lay out his argument (and tackle the rebuttals that it will inevitably provoke) and not a page longer."

• *Washington Post* "A brief and forceful broadside at the conundrum that has nagged at every major thinker from Plato to Slavoj Žižek. Self-avowedly secular, [Harris is] addressing the need for individual growth and social betterment, and [is] doing so with compelling argument and style."

• *Los Angeles Times* "Harris skewers the concept of free will • that mainstay of law, policy and politics • in fewer than 100 pages."

• *Nature* "Brilliant and witty • and never less than incisive"

• *Free Will* shows that Sam Harris can say more in 13,000 words than most people do in 100,000."

• *Oliver Sacks*

Praise for *The Moral Landscape*:

"The most compelling strand in *The Moral Landscape* is its unspooling diatribe against relativism."

• *New York Times* "This is an inspiring book, holding out as it does the possibility of a rational understanding of how to construct the good life with the aid of science, free from the accretions of religious superstition and cultural coercion."

• *Financial Times* "Harris's is a first-principle argument, backed by copious empirical evidence woven through a tightly reasoned narrative | Harris's program of a science-based morality is a courageous one that I wholeheartedly endorse."

• *Scientific American* "Sam Harris breathes intellectual fire into an ancient debate. Reading this thrilling, audacious book, you feel the ground shifting beneath your feet. Reason has never had a more passionate advocate."

• *Ian McEwan* "I was one of those who had unthinkingly bought into the hectoring myth that science can say nothing about morals. To my surprise, *The Moral Landscape* has changed all that for me. It should change it for philosophers too. Philosophers of mind have already discovered that they can't duck the study of neuroscience, and the best of them have raised their game as a result. Sam Harris shows that the same should be true of moral philosophers, and it will turn their world exhilaratingly upside down. As for religion, and the preposterous idea that we need God to be good, nobody wields a sharper bayonet than Sam

Harris. “Reading Sam Harris is like drinking water from a cool stream on a hot day. He has the rare ability to frame arguments that are not only stimulating, they are downright nourishing.” His discussions will provoke secular liberals and religious conservatives alike, who jointly argue from different perspectives that there always will be an unbridgeable chasm between merely knowing what is and discerning what should be. As was the case with Harris’s previous books, readers are bound to come away with previously firm convictions about the world challenged, and a vital new awareness about the nature and value of science and reason in our lives.

—Lawrence M. Krauss, Foundation Professor and Director of the ASU Origins Project at Arizona State University, author of *The Physics of Star Trek*, and, *Quantum Man: Richard Feynman’s Life in Science*

“A lively, provocative, and timely new look at one of the deepest problems in the world of ideas. Harris makes a powerful case for a morality that is based on human flourishing and thoroughly enmeshed with science and rationality. It is a tremendously appealing vision, and one that no thinking person can afford to ignore.”

—Steven Pinker, Harvard College Professor of Psychology, Harvard University, and author of *How the Mind Works* and *The Blank Slate*

“Expanding upon concepts posited in *and*, neuroscientist Harris draws from personal contemplative practice and a growing body of scientific research to argue that the self, the feeling that there is an ‘I’ residing in one’s head, is both an illusion and the primary cause of human suffering. The great value and novelty of this book is that Harris, in a simple but rigorous style, takes the middle way between pseudoscientific and pseudospiritual assertions, cogently maintaining that while such contemplative insights provide no evidence for metaphysical claims, they are available, and seeing them for ourselves leads to a profoundly more salubrious life.” (Publishers Weekly)

Sam Harris is the author of the bestselling books *The End of Faith*, *Letter to a Christian Nation*, *The Moral Landscape*, *Free Will*, and *Lying*. *The End of Faith* won the 2005 PEN Award for Nonfiction. His writing has been published in over fifteen languages. Dr. Harris is cofounder and CEO of Project Reason, a nonprofit foundation devoted to spreading scientific knowledge and secular values in society. He received a degree in philosophy from Stanford University and a PhD in neuroscience from UCLA. Please visit his website at SamHarris.org.

What a great book. I was born and grew up in Theravada Buddhist family. Even as a teenager I saw the value in the 4 Noble truths. But I couldn’t quite come to grips with the idea of Reincarnation &

the Law of Karma. That sounded like a "Celestial Accounting System that worked on Auto Pilot". To me that seems as nonsensical as the "Old Man in the Sky" offered by Abrahamic religions. Especially when as a young Buddhist one of the first things I remember learning is Buddha's admonishment to "Never believe in Dogma. But to sift all teachings (including his) through your own experiential filter. Then if it still seems valid to try it on". When you just take that teaching into heart and try on the concepts Karma & Reincarnation; it makes the 8 fold noble path a moot point. But Sam Harris brings a new perspective. Damn You Sam Harris! your arguments takes away my excuses for staying away from the meditation cushion. It is a pretty dense subject matter. With a chapter on Consciousness and another one on Self. While some of it was new and interesting, other ideas might take 2nd or 3rd reading to get through my thick skull. I think every Buddhist should read and consider what is laid out here. I highly recommend to anyone who has a intellectual curiosity about spirituality. Yet from my experience I know that only few of the most ardently spiritual would dare to tackle it. Between Sam Harris and Stephen Batchelor's writing they extend the Buddhas admonishment for experiential learning by applying 21st century rationality to the inquiry. These two writers and their writing gives a good intellectual foundation to wade into spirituality with healthy dose of 21st century agnosticism.

This is an important book in many ways. Perhaps most important because Sam Harris has, for the past several years, been a strong and outspoken critic of organized religion of all stripes. And one thing Harris can do better than almost anyone else, is make his case both clearly and powerfully without any added garbage. If you've watched his many videos on YouTube, you know the man can make an argument and stand his ground without wavering one iota. And the depth of his research is impressive. If Harris kept his message in this same vein, he would stay safe and continue to be accepted as a credible spokesman for the atheist perspective for a long time to come. But did he do that with this book? Not on your life. Harris, makes a whole different argument here, one that many may not be familiar with (but that is on display on his blog posts). Religion may be bunkum, he asserts, but spirituality (which may be the foundation of many religions), is a truly worthy pursuit. No doubt that a great many atheists are not going to like this one little bit. After all, atheists can sometimes be as narrow-minded as believers. For many, spirituality is seen as practically equivalent to religion. But in this book he makes a strong case that nothing could be further from the truth. And he doesn't make his arguments in a detached, completely intellectual way. Some might say that Harris has bought the spiritual kool-aid hook, link and sinker. Harris is a long-time (25+ years) meditator, seeker after wisdom, student of a variety of spiritual practices and disciple of various

teachers and gurus in several Eastern traditions. He most closely aligns himself with the school of non-duality or the direct path to awakening. And the stories of his search, his teachers and his realizations, were for me, the most compelling parts of the book. Two of the funniest parts, having to do with burst pipes and a rat in Kathmandu, demonstrate that he can easily poke fun at himself. Now, this is going to go far over the heads of a whole lot of people. This is not simple stuff. It's subtle and deep. And for me, the section on consciousness and the brain wasn't easy reading. Some may have a hard time accepting that his spiritual orientation is nothing but another irrational belief system that he has railed against for so long. So you've got to admit, this guy has guts. First he tears down every organized religion known to man as a bunch of irrational, destructive beliefs that only harm society, and then he takes the position that on the other hand, authentic spirituality is the most worthy pursuit one can possibly engage in. Many people are going to completely misunderstand Harris. (I can't wait to read more of the reviews as they are posted.) But he's also going to wake up a whole lot of people to a new perspective that they had never even considered seriously for a nanosecond. Some of the most highly regarded non-dualist teachers should be celebrating this book as it lends much credence to their teachings. Teachers and authors such as Rupert Spira (check out his YouTube videos), Greg Goode, and others, speak with clarity and authority about the non-dual perspective and are accessible to western seekers. To say that this book is a watershed moment for spirituality might be hyperbole, but just as Harris made it safer for atheists to come out of the closet, he does the same for those on the path of awakening. I can't wait to see what he writes next!

I grew up in a Christian family and then earned degrees in Philosophy and Neuroscience. As an atheist, I've been mourning the loss of faith for years. Just because you want something to be true, doesn't mean it is. Losing one's faith can definitely leave a hole. This is the book that begins to fill the void and emptiness that I've felt from that loss. Thank you Sam Harris. This book will change lives.

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