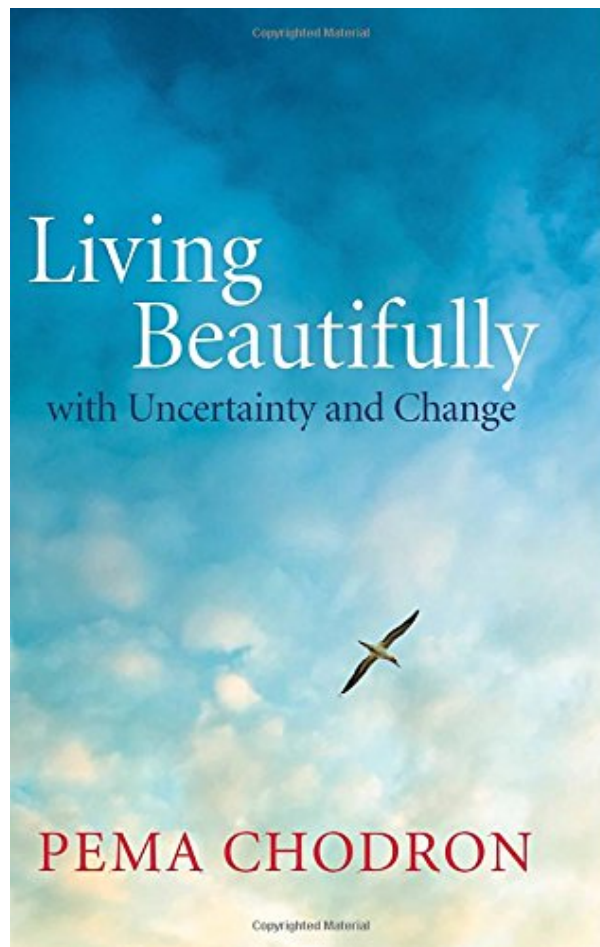


# LIVING BEAUTIFULLY: WITH UNCERTAINTY AND CHANGE BY PEMA CHODRON



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# Living Beautifully

with Uncertainty and Change



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## About the Author

Pema Chödrön is an American Buddhist nun in the lineage of Chögyam Trungpa. She is resident teacher at Gampo Abbey in Nova Scotia, the first Tibetan monastery in North America established for Westerners. She is the author of many books and audiobooks, including the best-selling *When Things Fall Apart* and *Don't Bite the Hook*.

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"The Three Commitments are three levels of working with groundlessness. Underlying them all is the basic instruction to make friends with yourself—to be honest with yourself and kind. This begins with the willingness to stay present whenever you experience uneasiness. As these feelings arise, rather than running away, you lean into them. Instead of trying to get rid of thoughts and feelings, you become curious about them. As you become accustomed to experiencing sensation free of interpretation, you will come to understand that contacting the fundamental ambiguity of being human provides a precious opportunity—the opportunity to be with life just as it is, the opportunity to experience the freedom of life without a story line."  
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We live in difficult times. Life sometimes seems like a roiling and turbulent river threatening to drown us and destroy the world. Why, then, shouldn't we cling to the certainty of the shore—to our familiar patterns and habits? Because, Pema Chödrön teaches, that kind of fear-based clinging keeps us from the infinitely more satisfying experience of being fully alive. The teachings she presents here—known as the “Three Commitments”—provide a wealth of wisdom for learning to step right into the river: to be completely, fearlessly present even in the hardest times, the most difficult situations. When we learn to let go of our protective patterns and do that, we begin to see not only how much better it feels to live that way, but, as a wonderful side effect, we find that we begin to naturally and effectively reach out to others in care and support.

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## Most helpful customer reviews

44 of 45 people found the following review helpful.

Open-Hearted Living at its best

By Pamela Hardy

I read this book because my life is so full of uncertainty and change right now. I am unemployed, and the

anxiety of not being able to pay the rent, the car loan, the bills is incredibly stressful. Pema's words do not allow me to escape the essential problems of my life, but to find the courage to act without the overwhelming sense of fear. Her words are like a soothing balm. Instead of just fear, she has helped me to see that I can take this as a time of deep spiritual growth - in a very real, honest way. I will read this book over and over again.

54 of 56 people found the following review helpful.

Embracing life simply as it is

By Sapio Waters

A distinctive compilation on the beauty of continuous change in everyday life, Pema Chödrön - once again - clearly and effortlessly shows her reader how to live a committed life within the present moment. Chödrön displays this approach to life by providing an educational framework concerning three forms of commitment. These "Three Commitments" entail embracing the fundamental groundlessness or impermanence in life, and the prevention of intentional harm to oneself and others; taking on the courage and responsibility to embrace others as oneself; and embracing the world just as it is. Through this framework, Chödrön provides her reader with the tools to progressively see the underlying stories that construct the ego, which - in turn - allow the mind's clouds (i.e. thought and emotion) to gradually dissipate, and eventually leave a clear mind of unconditional, non-judgmental, self-acceptance. With this clearing mind in progress, one is free to live beautifully with endless change and embrace life simply as it is.

125 of 128 people found the following review helpful.

Living by the Three Vows -- Challenging, Fulfilling, and Not Impossible

By Kevin W.

Using as the basis of this book the idea that all of our suffering comes from our fear of uncertainty, Chodron presents her path to freedom from this suffering. She presents the notion of "living by vows." Now, we're not talking head-shaved monastery living. Nor the drop-out (if enlightened) approach of *I Walked to the Moon* and *Almost Everybody Waved*. No, this book is for spiritual people committed to living in the modern, secular world. It's for laypeople. So these are meant more as guideposts than strict practices.

The three vows are:

- Pratimoksha. Commitment to personal liberation and doing no harm.
- Bodhisattva. Selfless service and alleviation of the suffering of others.
- Samaya. Accept reality as it is -- "awakened energy."

If this sounds intriguing, provocative, or helpful to you, I recommend this book.

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Pros: Communicates a reassuring message that we can be free from fear. Also about the essential goodness of humanity, and the fact that no failure is final. Has plenty of practical teaching.

Cons: You may have run across some of this material before. Like many spiritual teaches, Chodron tends to repeat herself. So while there is new material here, there's much that won't surprise you if you're a seasoned Chodron reader.

---7/19/13 Edit/Addition: I'm just about done reading *Extraordinary Zen Masters: A Maverick, a Master of Masters, and a Wandering Poet* and finding it a subtly inspiring book. I highly recommend it for anyone on the Buddhist or spiritual path. It won't wow you at first, but it grew on me as I appreciated it's quiet--bumps and all--interesting profiles of three historically important Zen masters.

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