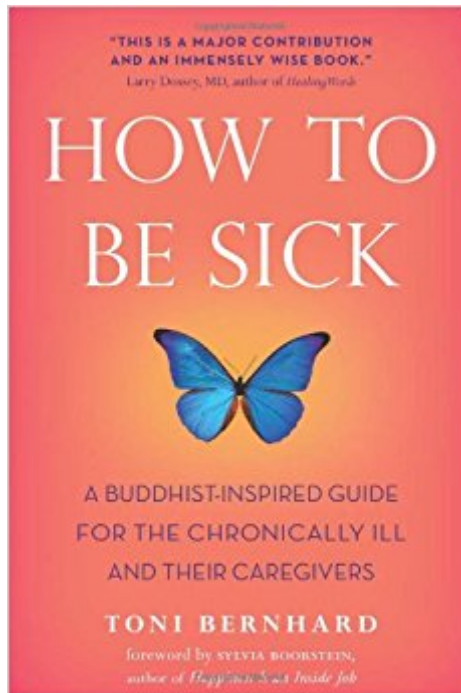


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# How To Be Sick: A Buddhist-Inspired Guide For The Chronically Ill And Their Caregivers



## Synopsis

This life-affirming, instructive, and thoroughly inspiring book is a must-read for anyone who is - or who might one day be - sick. It can also be the perfect gift of guidance, encouragement, and uplifting inspiration to family, friends, and loved ones struggling with the many terrifying or disheartening life changes that come so close on the heels of a diagnosis of a chronic condition or life-threatening illness. Authentic and graceful, *How to be Sick* reminds us of our endless inner freedom, even under high degrees of suffering and pain. The author - who became ill while a university law professor in the prime of her career - tells the reader how she got sick and, to her and her partner's bewilderment, stayed that way. Toni had been a longtime meditator, going on long meditation retreats and spending many hours rigorously practicing, but soon discovered that she simply could no longer engage in those difficult and taxing forms. She had to learn ways to make "being sick" the heart of her spiritual practice - and through truly learning how to be sick, she learned how, even with many physical and energetic limitations, to live a life of equanimity, compassion, and joy. And whether we ourselves are ill or not, we can learn these vital arts from Bernhard's generous wisdom in *How to Be Sick*.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I want to tell you about this wonderful book that Toni has written. I am lucky to be one of the few non-professional people to have had the privilege of reading *How to be Sick*. First, a little background about myself. I have stage four advanced breast cancer stemming from the genetic

mutation BRCA2. I nursed my Mother when she died, have been there while my sister and nieces have undergone and are still undergoing treatment and, of course, my own. I am now on a trial drug to try and stop my cancer spreading plus monthly treatments. All this means I have many days of lying on a bed being very unwell and am also facing a very uncertain future. Toni's book came to me through a link from a friend and it has been a god send. In the past I have both bought and been given a number of books on how to deal and be with my BC. Most are along the lines of me needing to think my cancer away, to completely change my diet, to think positively and so on - you know what I mean. There is none of that in Toni's book. It is simply the most practical and inspiring book I have read. Toni draws from not only wonderful Buddhist practices, but from movies, songs, people, writings, poetry, and her own experiences. She showed me how to face and be with my cancer, to feel the uncertainty, the fear, to be a woman lying on a bed so unwell, worrying...I have been around Buddhists for around 20 years (I am not a Buddhist myself) and the way Toni explains the concepts and practices of Buddhism is the best I have heard. Wow, Toni, I get it... or should I say - I'm getting it. I do not write this lightly, How to be Sick resonated with my very core. As I face all that is cancer, not only now but the future, I am so very very grateful to have Toni's book right there beside me. Thank you.

This book is not about how to get sick or how to stay sick. It's about how to "be" when you are sick. How to have a worthwhile existence, finding meaning, purpose and joy, even when chronic illness seems to have stolen your life away. It's a tall order. And one that many chronically ill people (and their caregivers) may feel too overwhelmed even to contemplate. Yet, Bernhard found that certain ways of being helped her through the dark tunnel. In effect, dealing with chronic illness became her spiritual practice, and she has valuable insights to offer others in the same condition.

Whether it's a car accident or lupus, we or a loved one, will have our active life stolen away from us someday. This book is one person's painful and, yes even, inspiring journey through the underworld of debilitating illness. But she doesn't leave us dwelling down there, rather her honesty, courage, and compassion brings us back up into a world of light. The author becomes a role model for how to find joy and thrive in a life turned upside down by chronic illness. While the title of this book has the word "Buddhist," it's really for all people regardless of spiritual preference. It's also a book for not only the healthy-life-deprived person, but also for their caregivers. Because chronic illnesses devastates the entire family, changes intimate relationships, and places a huge direct burden on the immediate caregiver, this is a book for all of us. The author even creatively wrote an "emergency

guide" at the back of the book that lists the myriad challenges faced by the family and then matches them to the relevant pages in the book. So, she has made her book, both a story and reference guide for her readers. I'll be honest with you, this is both a difficult book to read, as well as a heart-opening book. There's no way you can read it without being changed. The way the author has written this book, her personal struggle deeply touched me. And I'm not sure that if I was in her place, I could have found the emotional and physical strength to look in the mirror and honestly share with others what I saw.

This is a must read for anyone struggling with chronic disease. I hope that potential readers will not be turned off thinking that they "have to be Buddhist" to understand and benefit from it. Toni's book demonstrates how making the slightest attitude adjustments can significantly reduce pain and suffering for both the afflicted and the loved ones and caregivers in their lives. The solutions she presents are valuable. The situations she describes from her own experience are poignant but universally shared. Better than flowers, this book might be the most valuable gift you could ever give a friend or family member who is dealing with serious illness and its aftermath.

I really wanted to like this book. I gave it 2 stars because it is nicely written and I believe she had good intentions. This woman was established in life, married, had children and grandchildren and many years in a career that she was fortunate enough to be able to leave (although it was not easy to give up on). She can afford to lay in bed all day, with an extremely understanding husband and use these Buddhist practices to keep her at peace. I am in a much different boat. I was hoping this book would help me find a way to navigate the things in life that are difficult to get through when you are constantly sick, but instead she has a "give up what you can't handle" and accept it peacefully approach. I have to work. I am young and not ready to give up on life yet. I felt like this book made me even more depressed about being chronically ill. I'm sure it would be helpful to certain people in a situation more similar to hers, but it was not for me.

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