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Bestselling author of *Zen: The Art of Simple Living*

HOW TO LET THINGS GO



Shunmyo Masuno, the head priest of a 450-year-old Zen Buddhist temple in Japan, is the author of the international bestsellers *Don't Worry* and *Zen: The Art of Simple Living* as well as an award-winning Zen garden designer for clients around the world. He is a professor of environmental design at one of Japan's leading art schools and has lectured widely, including at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, Cornell University, and Brown University.

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Zen: The Art of Simple Living

Don't Worry

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HOW TO LET THINGS GO

Free yourself up for what matters most

Shunmyo Masuno

Translated by Allison Markin Powell

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FOREWORD

Those who have the power to let things go are not at the mercy of their personal relationships.

They don't feel compelled to be constantly connected on social media, so they don't monitor their friends by text 24/7, nor do they get caught up in gossip.

They know that friendship is about quality over quantity. They're good at disregarding the opinions and actions of people they don't even know.

Those who have the power to let things go are able to eliminate distractions at work.

They aren't easily swayed by others, so they don't obsess over the judgments of their coworkers. Nor do they allow useless or unnecessary information to motivate them.

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They consider how things relate to them, then make a decision and take action. They're good at blocking out superfluous information and external influences, such as what other people say or do.

Those who have the power to let things go are able to spend their days in relative ease.

They aren't weighed down by regret, nor do they waste time worrying about things that have yet to happen. They don't torment themselves. They're good at letting go of things they can't control, things that are inevitable, things that are in the past.

They know what they ought to let go of.

Doing so gives them clarity of mind and heart, enabling them to concentrate on what's important. By minimizing complications, they are free to live their best lives, in good health and comfort. There are many things in this world that we cannot control. Other people, the past, the future . . . let

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all those things go. Instead of allowing them to consume our mind and our energy, it's better to devote our efforts to what we can achieve in the moment.

There is a Zen expression, *hogejaku*, which means "Let go of everything." As that saying shows, a life in which you are able to let go is a Zen life.

Of course, at work or in relationships—as in everything in life—there will be things you can't let go of. How do you distinguish between what you ought to let go of and what you ought not to? I will address all of that in these pages.

I deeply hope that this book will help you learn how to let things go—and how to live your best life, in good health and comfort.

Gassho

SHUNMYO MASUNO

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Part One

DON'T GET OVERLY INVOLVED.

Be more detached in your relationships.

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1

LET THINGS GO AND YOUR LIFE WILL IMPROVE.

An indispensable life skill

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Now is the time to decide what to let go of.

You might think that to "let things go" has negative connotations.

To give something up halfway through, to leave something unfinished, to ignore an injustice, to neglect to follow up . . . aren't these the kind of things that are associated with letting go? They all seem to imply a sense of irresponsibility.

There's definitely some truth to this. In the examples above, I'd have to admit that to "let things go" seems unfavorable.

But in this world there are many things you'd be better off letting go of. Especially nowadays, when we are constantly inundated with information and when social media has made our personal relationships round-the-clock affairs, it's impossible to respond to everything.

This is precisely why it is all the more crucial to learn how to let things go. Really, we ought to refer to it as a survival skill.

Now more than ever, it's imperative to be able to differentiate between what we ought to hold on to and what we ought to let go of, in order to live our lives to the fullest.

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2

LEAVE PEOPLE ALONE.

This ability is essential for personal relationships.

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There is a fine line between being attentive and being meddlesome.

How do you react when someone is overcome with worry? People often do one of two things.

One option is to say something to try to cheer them up.

Another option is to say nothing, to do nothing, to leave them alone.

There is no right way to respond. I will merely say that often, the first option can be considered being meddlesome while the second might be seen as being attentive.

When someone is worrying about something, they often need some time to worry—alone. They are simply not in the mood for someone to tell them to do this or that, to encourage them to cheer up, or even to invite them out for a drink "to take their mind off things." Managing any response can be hard on them. It's often just more trouble.

Think about how you'd feel if you were in their situation, if you were the one worrying about something. Wouldn't you prefer to be left alone for a little while, until you've had a chance to calm down?

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