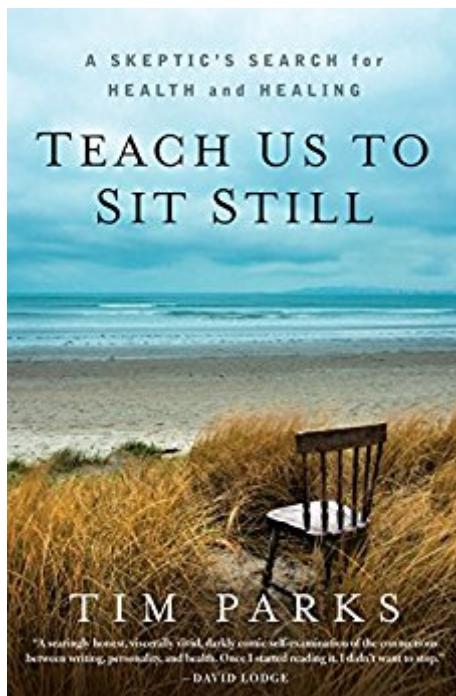


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Teach Us To Sit Still: A Skeptic's Search For Health And Healing



Synopsis

Teach Us to Sit Still is the visceral, thought-provoking, and inexplicably entertaining story of how Tim Parks found himself in serious pain, how doctors failed to help, and the quest he took to find his own way out. Overwhelmed by a crippling condition which nobody could explain or relieve, Parks follows a fruitless journey through the conventional medical system only to find relief in the most unexpected place: a breathing exercise that eventually leads him to take up meditation. This was the very last place Parks anticipated finding answers; he was about as far from New Age as you can get. As everything that he once held true is called into question, Parks confronts the relationship between his mind and body, the hectic modern world that seems to demand all our focus, and his chosen life as an intellectual and writer. He is drawn to consider the effects of illness on the work of other writers, the role of religion in shaping our sense of self, and the influence of sports and art on our attitudes toward health and well-being. Most of us will fall ill at some point; few will describe that journey with the same verve, insight, and radiant intelligence as Tim Parks. Captivating and inspiring, Teach Us to Sit Still is an intensely personal--and brutally honest--story for our times.

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Customer Reviews

Amazing book for frustrated men, which is nearly all of us. If you feel cranky, s***ty, trapped or bored with the way things are going, this book offers some really amazing insights, from a man who is going through a hellacious problem. The story of his resolve unfolds lessons for anyone willing to listen.

Tim Parks is amazingly candid about his nature, aspects of which are unpleasant and egocentric, but that is part of the magic of this engaging little book. It recounts a journey toward relief from pain that is as circuitous as, say, "The Odyssey" but certainly a good deal funnier. His evocation of some of the excruciating experiences of novice meditation is sharp as a razor, as his take-down of some of the delusional experiences common to those who go to their first few retreats. I wish, for the sake of Mr. Parks, that someone had pointed out earlier in the game that there are basic guides to Buddhist meditation that would have possibly spared him some confusion. But as everyone knows who has engaged this practice--or fallen into it!--nothing whatsoever can prepare you for it. As Natalie Goldberg said to me on my ride into my first retreat, "It will knock your head off", a more complex remark than initially meets the eye. The valuable core of this book is its revelation of the amazingly intricate relations of mind to body and body to mind through the story of one man's treatment of his own pain.

This book is a marvellous read. Not only has Tim Parks managed to write well about his struggles with chronic pelvis pain - he also manages to put the story into an exciting context based on his own work as a teacher and writer, as well as his roles as parent and husband. The story has numerous references to classic and modern books by famous writers. Parks weaves their stories into his own quest for answers and understanding. For anyone with an interest in literature and reading, these reflections are both well written and highly relevant. This really is NOT a book on meditation, however Parks shows how meditation helped him get rid of many of the symptoms through a rather heroic undertaking where he left no stone unturned. Being a fellow sufferer of CPPS (chronic pelvic pain syndrome), Tim Parks' book has given me many interesting ideas on how to continue the search for knowledge and insight. It is a difficult condition which has been largely ignored by doctors and researchers. Yet it is a crippling problem which causes a lot of agony for many people. Tim Parks argues, through exposure, that one reason why scientists struggle with identifying the

underlying causes for CPPS is that it is mostly a symptomatic affliction which may be better understood if we look to our own way of handling life's many problems. If you do not suffer from CPPS the book may not be immediately relevant. Still, it is an excellent story told by a master storyteller.

Carefully written book that includes many valuable insights. However any positive aspects of this book are overshadowed by its tedious whining and self indulgent, egocentric tone. Spare yourself, pass it by.

Four stars. Mr. Parks story is striking for those who have suffered with pelvic pain. It is demonstrative for those of us who are perfectionistic and need to connect the resultant suffering and the need to change - the need to back off and learn to sit still. Whether we get there with the Anderson-Wise protocol or meditation, or both, we have slow recoveries and the only alternatives are depression or misery. More physicians need to become aware of these sufferings and to help patients understand the cause and cure.

I enjoyed reading it enormously. It's a patient's perspective told honestly, and usefully perceptively. He got across the idea - with imagery, literary examples - that pain doesn't need to be purely 'physical' in the traditional sense to be real, and debilitating. The mind body interaction was described so well. Interesting he had the hyperacusis / hypersensitivity to noise- from a young age. Hypersensitivity is thought to be a consequence of chronic pain - the central sensitization and not an antecedent. So perhaps the pain theories are not entirely right yet

The first half or so is interesting but the author loses the thread and the rest is a boring self-indulgence in which the author demonstrates his oh-so-wonderful mastery of literature, stroking his own ego while claiming to have lost it.

I enjoyed this book very much as did my son who is actively practicing Zen.

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