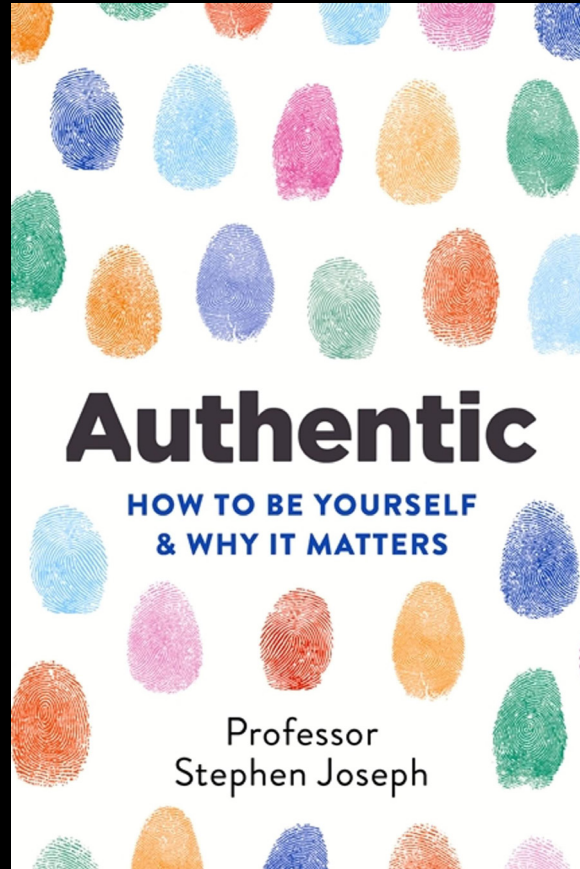


Unness book summaries and balanced review - Professor Stephen Joseph *Authentic*

Who is this book for? Our view:



1. It turns out there are lots of scientific psychological reasons why we aren't ourselves
2. This book is for people who want to understand what is stopping you living an authentic life

Who is this book not for?

1. People who know they are on purpose
2. People who absolutely know themselves inside out

What does the book say? A quick summary (If you want a fuller summary please e-mail info@uuness.com)

1. Preface – To be honest when we first read the title, there was part of us that thought, “How can you not be yourself, you have to be right?”. Wrong, this book shows, even if you know yourself really well, there are a lot of reasons why we don’t behave according to our true selves. Most of us don’t know ourselves well enough to recognise when we aren’t being authentic or why we are. This book shows the pitfalls that stop you being yourself and how to change it.
2. Introduction/Chapter One/Two and Three – Carl Rogers was one of the most influential psychologists and psychiatrists of the 20th century. He suggested that a key reason why people sort psychological help was because they seem inauthentic. The three things authentic people do 1. They know themselves 2. They own themselves and 3. They are prepared to be themselves. In Greek authentikos means acting on one’s own authority.
3. Chapter Four – covers what derails us from being authentic. Rogers likened it to a potatoes in the basement of a house. They will always grow towards the light, but they’ll never be a potato put in the soil. Their circumstances stop them being “true potatoes”. Our circumstances (especially upbringing) can block us from being our true selves without our even knowing it.
4. Chapter Four invites us to listen to our inner voice of wisdom. There is a lot of conditioning here that stops it. For example – conditional love from our parents “you did well so...”. Here are some common choices – work hard, please others, never cry, don’t get angry, don’t show weakness and do as I’m told. These are all very common.
5. Chapter Five invites us to spot our defences. Defences that attack our sense of self-worth stop us being honest and true. There are defences that deny, for example – repression or sublimation, the latter is where we channel something undesirable into something accepted e.g. sex drive turned into exercise. Other defences distort reality. Projection – where we attribute feelings to others that are our own. Rationalisation – we tell ourselves we didn’t really want our dream job. Others help us short term. Intellectualisation e.g. we are diagnosed with cancer and focus on the procedures.
6. Chapter Six encourages us to find the “flourishing life” as expounded by Martin Seligman in his address to the American Psychological Association. Follow your “flow”, be intrinsically motivated, identify your strengths and find the cross over.
7. Chapter Seven introduces The Authenticity Scale. Authentic people are happier, healthier, more virtuous, more realistic, resilient, play to their strengths, have better relationships and a better life.
8. Chapter Eight invites you to know yourself – through a series of exercise - They include understanding your personal history, people you admire, your values, look at your dreams, identify your most authentic relationships and find your ideal self.

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9. Chapter 9 invites you to own yourself. To admit your mistakes and look at them, understand your defences, use the five whys to find what really matters to you, pre-empt defensive behaviour, be open to new information, find the grain of truth in criticism, be confident, don't look back on life with regrets, write your mission statement and overcome negative evaluation.
10. Chapter 10 invites you to be yourself. Is your life joined up – i.e. are you following your passions and what is important for you? Do you listen to yourself carefully and speak the truth from that? Do you accept yourself? Are you assertive and do you have clear boundaries? Can you articulate your dream and chunk it up into achievable elements?
11. Chapter 11 expounds the benefits of nurturing authenticity in your children. It's a very carefully considered and nuanced chapter which allows you to understand what unconditional love truly means, how you let your children find their own path, how to avoid living through your children and find true balance.
12. Chapter 12 – Looks at Toxic Workplaces. It invites you to lead these environments into less toxicity and to develop authentic leadership in both yourself and those around you by giving them guidance and autonomy.
13. Chapter 13 talks about authentic friendship – and it's basis on having adult authentic relationships as opposed to those being disguised by other things. For example ego where you are in fact being a parent to a friend.

Quotes from the book we liked

1. Nurse Bronnie Ware who wrote "The Top Five regrets of dying" said "the most common regret of those about to die is not having had the courage to live a life true to oneself"
2. "From when we wake up in the morning, to when we go to sleep, most of us have at least some points in our day when we can truly be ourselves, but for many parts of the day we are putting on a show"
3. Dr Seuss "Be who you are and say what you feel because those that mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind"
4. Steve Jobs in 2011 "Your time is limited, so don't waste time living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma which is living the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of other people's opinions drown out your own inner voice. And, most important of all, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition...you already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary"
5. The three things authentic people do "To summarise these three things authentic people do well: they know themselves, they own themselves and they are prepared to be themselves"
6. "What a man can be, he must be, this need we call self actualisation" Maslow
7. "When we are locked into conditions of worth, we need constant approval from others that we are working hard enough, earning enough, being the best or whatever it is that we feel we need to do to meet expectations and be valued"
8. "Authentic people can be critical of their own behaviour, not to put themselves down but to learn and change".
9. "When our anxiety is not caused by an objectively threatening event in the world but the niggling discomfort that comes from the physiological tension of living inauthentically, we can wear our batteries out"
10. "Defences are the opposite of authenticity...most often learned behaviours are to protect ourselves during childhood"

Quotes from the book we liked

11. "Happiness is when what you think, what you say and what you do are in harmony"
12. "...Most (psychologists and psychiatrists) had simply assumed a good life resulted from an absence of psychological problems"
13. "The conclusion is that pleasure without purpose feels empty, but ironically, when we feel empty of purpose, we tend to chase pleasure to fill the void"
14. "Self handicapping is a topic studied by social psychologists interested in how people create and find impediments reduce the likelihood of good performance or that act as "insurance" against the possibility it might not be a good performance"
15. "...most people think of themselves as authentic and, of course, as we have seen, one of the problems is that we don't always know ourselves well enough to realise we lack authenticity"
16. "I must be willing to give up what I am in order to become what I will be" Einstein
17. "Often people will immediately talk about having more money, a larger and more luxurious home, but when pushed to say more they may struggle to know how they would actually like to spend their time"
18. "Much of everyday activities are of this nature with people making socially acceptable conversation that disguise a host of interior messages"
19. "If your boss asks you to do something you don't want to do, are you in the right job?"
20. "Being an authentic leader is not what you say you are: it is what you are"

Balanced review of the book

Where the book is strong

- It takes you on a logical journey through your skills, passions, your attitude and your tribe to help you find your life purpose
- At the end of each chapter, or during each chapter there are exercises to help you with that section
- Often there are different ways to do each exercise to fit your personal learning or thinking style
- There are so many truly brilliant personal stories in this book which are both inspiring and illustrative
- These stories range from people who haven't been working who find purpose, to people who put it all on the line, to people who gradually move into purpose
- This book is particularly strong for people who just feel that "something is somehow missing"
- The book's tone of voice is very direct and easy to read, it's like you are sitting with Stephen Joseph and he's having a conversation with you.

Areas where it is weaker

- If you feel strongly that God needs to be involved actively in finding your purpose – by prayer, meditation or other formal rituals this book isn't for you
- If you find it hard to discipline yourself to do exercises on your own without facilitation then this book isn't for you
- If you are impatient and just want to do the exercises without context, then this book isn't for you
- That said, this book is one of the best substitutes for doing uuness if you can't afford it, combine the following - do the exercises and join a Facebook group that's about purpose.
- The latter two things are the closest and cheapest alternative to uuness.