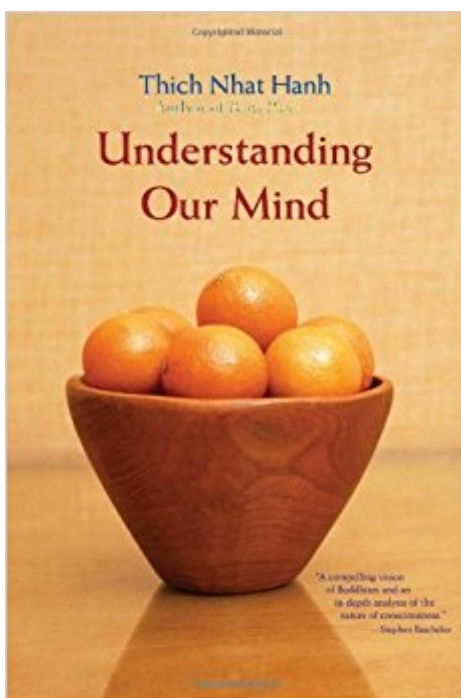


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# Understanding Our Mind: 50 Verses On Buddhist Psychology



## Synopsis

A finalist for the 2001 Nautilus Award, *Understanding Our Mind*, is Thich Nhat Hanh's profound look at Buddhist psychology with insights into how these ancient teachings apply to the modern world. Based on the fifty verses on the nature of consciousness taken from the great fifth-century Buddhist master Vasubandhu and the teachings of the Avatamsaka Sutra, Thich Nhat Hanh focuses on the direct experience of recognizing, embracing, and looking deeply into the nature of our feelings and perceptions. Presenting the basic teachings of Buddhist applied psychology, *Understanding Our Mind* shows us how our mind is like a field, where every kind of seed is planted—seeds of suffering, anger, happiness, and peace. The quality of our life depends on the quality of the seeds in our mind. If we know how to water seeds of joy and transform seeds of suffering, then understanding, love, and compassion will flower. Vietnamese Zen Master Thuong Chieu said, "When we understand how our mind works, the practice becomes easy."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Thich Nhat Hanh is one of the most revered Zen teachers in the world today. His best-selling books include *Happiness and Peace Is Every Step*. He lives in Plum Village in southwest France, where he teaches the art of mindful living.

The present moment contains the past and the future. The secret of transformation at the base lies in our handling of this very moment --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this

title.

I read this books years ago. I had a friend who was suffering PTSD and was suicidal over the trauma. I was so afraid as he spiraled deeper into depression that he would kill himself. I live 3 hours from him so we started reading a chapter twice weekly and discussing it on Tuesday and Friday nights. In 2 weeks it helped him so much to understand his own mind that he lost his desire to commit suicide, something his therapist had not been able to accomplish for more than a year.

While I agree with the other reviewers that the subject matter of this book is complex, my experience has been that upon completion, all the pieces fall into place with incredible grace. In a nutshell, we need to practice nourishing the seeds (content) of our consciousness--and unconsciousness--with mindfulness. Mindfulness is the sunshine that nourishes 'wholesome' seeds and enables the transformation of 'unwholesome' seeds, such as anger, envy and desire into peace, love and compassion. What then is mindfulness? Mindfulness is a continuous practice that includes meditation and an effort to live healthily and happily in the present moment, as opposed to regretfully in the past or fearfully in the non-existent future. Suffering occurs because our mind distorts our perceptions and we mistake perception for reality, arriving at erroneous conclusions about the people, places and events that surround us. Once we realize this and begin to achieve greater levels of mindfulness through practice and meditation, we can begin to transform suffering into joy. So, yes, while some of the ideas in this book are complex (such as the concept of interbeing) its essences is elegant in its simplicity. Incidentally, my father was a Freudian Psychoanalyst and over the course of my life (45) I have spent many hours with him discussing the role of the unconscious in relation to our everyday impulses and actions. I also went through 5 years of intensive psychoanalysis as a young adult. The conceptual base presented in Understanding Our Mind is not altogether different from Freud's treatment of the unconscious. As the author himself points out, the main difference is that Freud emphasizes examining past events rather than transforming their manifestations as mental formations in the present (p.232). I am just now embarking on the path of practicing mindfulness, yet I have little doubt that it will surpass the results achieved through traditional psychoanalytic therapy.

As noted by another reviewer, this is not an easy book to read and it's not something to be tackled in large segments. Each of the fifty chapters should be closely examined and considered before moving on to the next. Sometimes, in the context of books on Eastern Philosopy, this is a result of

translation or editing problems, however, with this book, it is simply a matter of an incredibly complex subject. If you are curious about your mind and its ability to transform your world, you will really enjoy this book. If you want to understand meditative techniques, this book is an excellent resource as well. If you are contemplating the purchase of your first book on Buddhism, I would suggest another path, perhaps "Turning the Mind into an Ally," by Sakyong Mipham, which is by no means simple, but well-adapted to communicating with the Western Mind. I would also suggest Thich Nhat Hahn's book "The Miracle of Mindfulness," as a good starting point.

Great thorough book on Buddhist psychology. By developing upon each verse, some of Buddhist's key concepts previously misunderstood became clear to me as a westerner reader. Highly recommended to those that have read a few books on Buddhism and want to dig a little bit deeper. By presenting a road map of existence from the individual outward and it's myriad interconnections with every aspect of life, concepts like interdependent coexistence and seeing the all in the one become logically apparent.

Buddhist psychology is getting more attention than it used to which is a good thing. Thich Nhat Hahn is clear and his commentary is to these eyes accessible. I know that some of the reviews here talk of the book being too technical - perhaps that is because of not being familiar with the territory. To those who would seek a Western grounding in Buddhist Psychology I would suggest John Welwood's book "Toward A Psychology Of Awakening" in my view also a desert island book. This is not just another Thich Nhat Hahn book for the general reader but it is one worth having just in case it goes out of print and can be read when ready.

Came quickly, great book. I'd order from company and book again.

good!

This book is exceptional. I'll be reading it again. It offers some extraordinary insights and, following the practices offered, can lead to a much more stable, peaceful life experience.

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