

SHOVEL IT!

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Kick-Ass Advice

To Turn Life's **CRAP** into

the Peace and Happiness You Deserve

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TO MY HUSBAND, ONE of the most courageous crap shovelers I know. Thank you for your unending devotion to me. Your insistence I go for my dreams has changed the trajectory of my life.

Heartfelt thanks to all the reactive, depressed, mean, lousy, lying, neurotic, crazy, manic and angry people I have met. I have compassionately used your pain, and inability to resolve your issues, to teach myself how to create more peace and happiness. Without you I would be less stable and more anxious, less joyful and more depressed, less forgiving and more punitive, less kind and more thoughtless, less optimistic and more cynical, less courageous and unconvinced I can make this adventure however I want it to be.

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SHOVEL IT!



INTRODUCTION: B.Y.O.S. (BRING YOUR OWN SHOVEL)

“Cheer up! The worst is yet to come.”
—Anonymous

LET’S FACE IT: there’s an enormous amount of crap on this planet and it has to be dealt with. Buddhism teaches that to be human is to suffer, but I think that to be human is to shovel. We’re a species bound to shovel life’s challenges twenty-four seven. So let’s get going!

Thank God we are learning a lot about making intelligent environmental choices. Learning about how to make better decisions in the cars we drive, the light bulbs we use, and the way we treat our trash. Because that’s only half of the problem we have with crap.

The stresses you see in the earth’s ecosystems are a lot like what resides in each of our personal ecologies. Whether it’s self generated or inflicted upon you, the pollution of negative thinking, the gas guzzling appetite of greed, the unregulated dumping of guilt, the noxious fumes of judgment, the destruction of your personal ozone layer from shame, the irresponsible disposal of anger, the disinformation campaign of righteousness—our mental, emotional and spiritual emissions—choke off your happiness and erode your birthright to live a balanced, peaceful, happy life.

Have you considered the effects of global warming in your brain every time some bozo cuts you off on the freeway, parking lot, or grocery store line? Or your toxicity levels when an automated call system disconnects you after being on hold for twenty-two minutes trying to give a credit card company your change of address so you won’t miss a billing cycle and end up in collections? Okay, how about when I mention these three words: sub prime mortgage. Seeing red or green? What’s a good person, wanting to live a more balanced, caring, conscious life, to do in a world filled with so many hardships?

If you’d like some answers, then this book is for you. Together, we will courageously face the fact that your well-being is going to be perpetually tested by both conceivable and

inconceivable problems. The only recourse is to learn how to survive the onslaught and emerge the victor. Your inner ecology is your responsibility. Just as you are (hopefully!) contributing to the betterment of our global ecological destiny, you must take control of your inner life too.

One good thing about crap is that it's also fertilizer for growth. Used correctly, it is rich in nutrients.

Shortly, I will share with you my seven tried and true ways to stay sane on this planet and live a more mentally, emotionally, and spiritually responsible (and just friggin' better) life. I call these techniques my "crap shovelers." I invite you to add them to your coping repertoire if you have one, or use them as a jumping off place to build your own earth-friendly survival kit.

When you embrace these strategies, use them, and repeat them often enough, you will see phenomenal results. These tools, and others yet to come (Hey, I'm a movie producer: I'm trained to think "sequel"!), will add a vital degree to your educational process: a M.C.S., a Masters in Crap Shoveling. You can utilize your M.C.S. to keep yourself happy instead of sad, accepting rather than angry, and making choices you will be proud of in the morning instead of ones that will increase your pain after the initial elation of pepper-spraying someone with four letter words has worn off. All you need is a shovel. A good sense of humor. And the commitment to dig!

CRAP SHOVELING OVERVIEW

“A Yogi goes into a pizza parlor and orders a slice with everything on it. He gives the proprietor a \$20 bill. The proprietor pockets the money. The Yogi says, “Don’t I get change?” The proprietor replies, “Change must come from within.”

—Inspired by a joke found on Richard Pettinger’s internet site

HERE’S MY DEFINITION OF mental, emotional, and spiritual crap that can pile up in the corners, crevices, and intersections of your life:

Mental crap: Beliefs that separate you from your commonality and make you want to kick the living daylights out of someone.

Emotional crap: All hurts, pains, and wounds that cause you to act in ways that harmfully affect yourself and/or others.

Spiritual crap: All uses of God, divine energy, or universal teachings that make you right and the other person wrong, so that the wrong person’s life is diminished in value.

According to the Carter Center (as in Jimmy) we live in the most violent (AKA physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually crapped up) chapter of human history. Good, decent, kind, ethical, hard-working people are an endangered species. The rich have never been richer, nor the poor poorer. Vast economic disparities have produced deprivation, despair, and a profound sense of disconnection. When people are desperate—which means they no longer have hope—they can act badly. Very badly. Scared people spew emotional smog at the drop of a shovel, forgetting to practice beliefs and philosophies that would reduce harmful exhaust. Much like waiting to see if polar bears can sprout water-wings before they all drown, we tend to fantasize about an external solution to our internal debris. We want to be taken over and bailed out like the government did for Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, AIG, Bank of America, CitiGroup, GM, Chrysler and the list goes on . . . and on. We dream that success will alleviate our troubles. But it won’t. It never has. Hard-earned success is often intersected by tragedy. Just ask Hugh McCutchen, the phenomenal American volleyball coach at the Beijing Olympics whose father-in-law was murdered on a Monday and then won a gold medal the following Thursday.

What can give us more control over the quality of our lives? One thing for sure: a shovel and your crap shoveling techniques! They will help you turn your troubles into the peace and happiness you deserve. With them you can build and board the bio-fueled bus to your own mental, emotional, and spiritual salvation. You will learn to outsmart the down times and have more joy. Recycle your anger and create more sustainable peace. Heal your wounds and enjoy more choice. Learn from others so you don't have to live through every horrible situation yourself. Gain dominion over your mind, emotions, and spiritual beliefs so they are adding value to your human footprint, not raising the disappointment level.

Along the way, become a pre-cycler; that's someone who is conscious about what they buy and chooses products based on less waste reduction. Learn to spot the bumps and smooth them out before you bring them home. Become a master crap shoveler and pass your knowledge forward.