

**Book Review of  
Deep Living: Transforming Your Relationship to Everything  
that Matters through the Enneagram**

by Roxanne Howe-Murphy

*Reviewed by Katy Taylor*

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*Return to the most human,  
nothing less will nourish the torn spirit,  
the bewildered heart,  
the angry mind:  
and from the ultimate duress,  
pierced with the breath of anguish,  
speak of love.<sup>1</sup>*

*Deep Living*, Roxanne Howe-Murphy's rich and welcoming introductory Enneagram book, provides a comprehensive path to inhabiting our lives, to returning to our humanness, and to living a life of presence. Drawing nourishment from deep tap roots in the Riso-Hudson Approach to the Enneagram, Howe-Murphy's second book draws on the Enneagram as a map for cultivating presence. She expands the RH lineage by further developing the embodied aspects of practicing presence, a direction Don Riso himself sought to develop in his last years through his and Russ's offering of the *Inner Work Retreat: Being in the Body*.

Howe-Murphy's book fills a much-needed gap since *The Wisdom of the Enneagram* was published in 1999, providing detailed descriptions and practical tools for Enneagramers and non-Enneagramers alike to walk the path of spiritual transformation in an every-day, human life. It is filled with hands-on practices for returning "to the most human," to an experience of our real, deep, and essential nature.

Howe-Murphy advocates diving into our imperfect (and perfect) humanness, for only there can our wholeness be found. We can't jump over the "torn spirit," the "bewildered heart," or the "angry mind" in order to find our real nature. We must

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<sup>1</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> stanza of May Sarton's poem, "Return to the Most Human," from *May Sarton, Collected Poems, 1990-1993*, W.W. Norton & Co, 1992.

first become aware of how we disconnect from ourselves in order to find the path to true healing and wholeness. We must, as she reminds us throughout the book, “turn toward ourselves.”

Howe-Murphy’s writing is imbued with an inherently type Nine perspective—its kind, familiar, comfortable, and encouraging style welcomes and invites us in. Over and over, she emphasizes our interconnectedness, our common humanity, our wholeness, and our connection to love. In fact, even the title, *Deep Living*, implies an awakening Nine—one who knows how to live in a deeply engaged manner, “founded on building [our] capacity for living with presence in everyday life” (86). Furthermore, throughout the book, her humility and willingness to name her own habitualness, false assumptions, and missteps—in essence, her humanness—invites us to embrace our own.

Howe-Murphy has created an accessible and practical book to introduce anyone to personal growth work using the Enneagram. Her introductory chapters invite the reader to explore, in their own experience, what she considers to be key concepts for transformation. She starts at the beginning with awareness, spelling out how what we pay attention to can make the difference between deepening our contact or taking us away (generically and in type-specific ways). She also writes about three intentional behaviors to increase our capacity to be present, which Enneagramers will recognize as Center-based capacities (grounding, attention to the heart, being curious). Then introducing the Enneagram as a “map of human experience,” (9) Howe-Murphy brilliantly connects how we as humans, as part of nature, experience repeating patterns, and how recognizing these can reveal the direction home. She further provides many clues to understanding the personality so that the reader can discern it from our true nature.

While the core pillars of Enneagram theory are widely known and have been developed by many teachers before her, Howe-Murphy offers some new ways to approach the fundamentals that are very helpful.

- **The Triangle of Identity** is a simple way of understanding the general themes that habitually run each type. The core belief about how to find satisfaction generates a desire to pursue or avoid certain experiences. This pursue-avoid polarity culminates in a coping strategy which keeps us stuck in the pursue-avoid-cope loop and generates a sense of ego self. Not only does this schema align nicely with the Buddha’s teaching that human suffering is sustained by the triangle of desire, aversion, and delusion, it

also accounts for why we often feel stuck. We are repeating this cycle over and over, driven by our type's passion.

- **The Social Style Clusters**, which Riso and Hudson also refer to as the Hornevians, are renamed in a way that positively reflects how each triad copes in social situations. Howe-Murphy also provides more specific information about the behavior, inner feelings, and energetic component of each Social Style. The RH Withdrawn types are called Private/Introspective, the RH Assertive types Assured/Confident, and the RH Dutiful types Service-Oriented/Responsible types.
- **The Iceberg Model** provides a visual for the architecture of the personality, both above (conscious) and below (unconscious) the waterline. It provides a comprehensive model of how our personality can hum along uninterrupted, each structural piece keeping another \*going. Having a visual that remains consistent across types provides the reader with a mnemonic for recognizing similarities and differences in the key features of each type.

*Return, return to the deep sources,  
nothing less will teach the stiff hands a new way to serve,  
to carve into our lives the forms of tenderness  
and still that ancient necessary pain preserve.<sup>2</sup>*

Throughout Howe-Murphy's book, the emphasis on returning home to our true nature is beautifully balanced by hands-on, practical ways to "teach the stiff hands a new way to serve." Almost everywhere the reader turns, there are suggestions, exercises, inquiry questions, and invitations to try a new way of being in order to help the reader recognize and interrupt their habitual type activity.

- In Chapter Four, "Creating A New Relationship With Yourself," she offers Four Vital Qualities for the journey, which include excellent inquiry questions along with key examples and honest self-disclosure. Also in this chapter, an in-depth exploration of how to self-observe—the *what*, the *how*, and the *inner experience*—with helpful examples, provides hands-on tools for change.

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<sup>2</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> stanza of May Sarton's poem, "Return to the Most Human," from *May Sarton, Collected Poems, 1990-1993*, W.W. Norton & Co, 1992.

- Howe-Murphy’s emphasis on somatic awareness is woven throughout the book, with the message being that we are embodied beings, and that there is great intelligence to be found by listening to the body’s messages. We forget this at the risk of our own wholeness. She mindfully weaves body awareness into the fabric of each type description, into the introductory chapters, and into each exploration of the Centers, focusing on sensation and somatic awareness not only in the Belly Center, but in the Heart and Head Centers as well. The reader is thus encouraged to develop an ability to return to their own “deep sources,” rooted in the physical presence of right now, in any moment.
- The map of change offered through *Deep Living* involves, in each moment, the practice of turning toward ourselves with curiosity, compassion, honesty, and trust. Exploring generic and type-specific ways that we turn away from life as well as misconceptions about the journey, Howe-Murphy offers the reader a way to deepen their presence through Deep Living Transformation Process (DLTP) and an exploration of the Inner Critic. DLTP and her work “From Inner Critic to Inner Authority” are both obviously steeped in the method of the Diamond Approach, and offer very practical approaches to working with ourselves to come into ever greater contact with our true selves.

All of these practices and processes help the serious student to “carve into our lives the forms of tenderness” which, with committed practice to accept and welcome our bodies, hearts, and minds, keeps it possible to “still that ancient necessary pain preserve.”

While *Deep Living* is a beautiful and thorough compendium for cultivating presence, there were a few things I felt might have been approached differently for more ease of reading. The Iceberg Model, while a very helpful metaphor, introduces so much terminology that is a bit too much to take in. The reader looking for an exhaustive compendium will love the finely detailed accounts of the psychic structure of each personality, but the reader looking for a quick introduction might find the in-depth explanations a bit overwhelming. In addition, the book was designed to be picked up and read at any place, which does cause repetition for those who want to read it straight through. While this could be a challenge to read from cover to cover, the upside is that one can begin anywhere and quickly get oriented.

*Return to the most human,  
nothing less will teach the angry spirit,  
the bewildered heart,  
the torn mind,  
to accept the whole of its duress,  
and pierced with anguish...  
at last, act for love.<sup>3</sup>*

In *Deep Living*, Howe-Murphy upholds our dignity as humans and our capacity for being fully awake. She presents an inherently life-affirming approach to growth, reflected in such comments as “You are wired for presence.” (331), “You are so much more than your familiar patterns.” (384), and “There is no perfection, only practice.” (386).

Howe-Murphy emphasizes over and over that the Enneagram is a map of love. It invites us to “return to the most human,” regardless of how angry, bewildered, or torn we are, to turn toward ourselves with compassion, and curiosity, to accept all of our human selves. I recommend this book to Enneagramers and non-Enneagramers alike as an aid and a comfort for seeing through the repetitive patterns that keep us stuck and opening to a deeper more embodied experience of who we truly are, so that we can all, “at last, act for love.”

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<sup>3</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> stanza of May Sarton’s poem, “Return to the Most Human,” from *May Sarton, Collected Poems, 1990-1993*, W.W. Norton & Co, 1992.