


What Really Matters: Searching for Wisdom in America

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At the height of his career as a journalist, Tony Schwartz hit an unexpected wall. Why did success suddenly feel so empty? How could he add richer meaning to his everyday life? What guides could he trust on the road to wisdom?

During the next five years his search for answers took him from a meditation retreat in the mountains of Utah to a biofeedback laboratory in Kansas, from a peak-performance workshop at a tennis academy in Florida to a right-brain drawing course in Boston. Blending the hunger of a seeker with a journalist's hard-headed inquiry, he discovered the best teachers and techniques for inner development--and identified the potential pitfalls and false gurus he met along the way. What he found dramatically changed his life. It may change yours as well.

What Really Matters: Searching for Wisdom in America Details

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Author : Tony Schwartz

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From Reader Review What Really Matters: Searching for Wisdom in America for online ebook

Sarah Fields says

This book is not terrible, but will be least disappointing when viewed simply as a heavily-annotated bibliography. Too anecdotal to make a good encyclopedia but too detached for an interesting personal narrative, and with prose itself overall so painfully boring as each new personality critique with personal biography becomes more facile and exhaustive than the one before, so that I found myself skipping through the book just to get pointers for further reading, *What Really Matters* could have been more aptly named.

This book should have been written by someone with a deeper grasp of a) scientific method; b) both Eastern and Western philosophical traditions; and c) the skill to explain how each of the methods profiled attempts to relate to those three things and to what extent it succeeds and fails. That would have made this incredibly ambitious attempt to survey the American "consciousness movement" relevant to the unconverted.

Gwen Davies says

A great tour of many aspects of the human potential movement. It was written in 1995 and I wish there was an update or sequel.

Lynn Wilson says

A wonderful chronicle of important consciousness research up to the date of publication.

Schwartz, a bit of a skeptic, used himself as his own research subject. An entertaining and informative read. Especially helpful for those who have little grounding in the human potential movement. It will answer many of your questions.

Nancy says

One person's exploration to find what really matters. It was a life changing event for him and took him 4 years. He found inspiration in a variety of ways, which was, to me, a validation that the Almighty has methods for helping everyone, including those who have no belief in the Almighty.

Abner Rosenweig says

Schwartz's interviews of some of America's leading figures of wisdom in the 20th century make a compelling subject for a book, and some of his content is first rate. The ideas about health in chapters 3-6 are particularly fascinating, and it's tragic they are not more widely applied in the mainstream. In general, the

book opened my mind to many thinkers and traditions that I might have otherwise overlooked. For example, I haven't been able to appreciate Ken Wilber--the image of his giant head on the covers of his books has given me a profound skepticism of the man--yet, the portrait of Wilber that Schwartz paints here piques my curiosity enough that I will now give him a try. What Really Matters is a bit overwritten at times, puffed up with a lot of stuffing about Schwartz's personal journey that does not add much value to the read. The work could have been much leaner and meaner if it lost 100 to 200 pages. Still, I highly recommend pouring through the excess to discover the pearls inside.

Wayne G says

Schwartz gives a good overview of many different traditional and non-traditional spiritual paths... all looked at even-handedly...

Dana Edwards says

after I read this i was scheduled to move to a meditation retreat but a forest fire broke out and then a newspaper radiohead and i went to high school with the guy whose dad used to own the major world paper.

Deb (Readerbuzz) Nance says

I spent all last Sunday afternoon reading this book. It's an older book, with a copyright in the 90's, so some of it comes across as a bit dated. I grimaced here and there, reading about some of the "wisdom" Schwartz sought, using the power of brain waves, for example, acts I've always tended to regard as hocus-pocus mumbo jumbo. I carried away a lot of positive scientific evidence for meditation; I will seek more information about that. I also learned that one study found 75% of people have some sort of back problems but experience no pain. Curious. I was especially interested in the chapters that touched on dealing with cancer. A study showed that almost all cancer patients had undergone an exceptionally traumatic event in their lives in the year before they were diagnosed with cancer.

Margy Levine Young says

Nat Kuhn recommended this book during a long car ride when he drove me from Dad's beach house to the Option Institute in MA/CT in the fall of 2003. I'd mentioned that a new women's reading group was looking for books that we could read and discuss a chapter at a time, and I chose this one from among his suggestions. Its a survey of the available "paths to wisdom" in the America of the 1980s and 1990s, written by a successful journalist who was finding life empty and meaningless. I gave a copy to Grandma Diane for Christmas 2003.

GONZA says

I have read carefully only the parts that were interesting for me, as I'm not keen in some lateral thinking, tennis of yoga, but the author made a really good job in researching and the part about the psychotherapy are illuminating.

Ho letto attentamente solo le parti che mi interessavano, anche perché non vado matta per certe specie di pensiero laterale, tennis o yoga, a parte questo l'autore ha svolto un minuzioso lavoro di ricerca e la parte sulla psicoterapia é stata illuminante.

Kirk Plankey says

I was not expecting what I found in this book. I purchased it on a whim with no research into it at all. I was expecting a more Ben Franklin, American common sense, Apple Pie, type book. What I was pleasantly surprised to find was that it is actually a "New Age" type of book documenting the first forty years or so of the Human Potential Movement. Starting with Ram Dass and the Esalen Institute. The work is very autobiographical as Tony tries almost every form of meditation and self-improvement techniques that he documents in the book. He also does a brief bio and introduction for every thinker that he interviews and includes in the work. At first I was very optimistic but as I came to the end of the work I was overwhelmed by the amount of choices that are out there. His concluding chapter basically summarizes that what is needed is a synthesis and a meshing of different methods and teachers and that no one way is THE WAY. That we need both psychological and spiritual transcendent work to fully grow as human beings. This book is a good starting point if you want to become familiar with a variety of thinkers and systems that were/are part of the New Age/Human Potential Movement. This work will serve well as a launching pad both because of the information imparted as well as the authors own conveyance of his highs and lows and experiences in trying the varied methods involved. We should all be so lucky as to have as many opportunities as he has had.

Kate says

I have owned this book for many years and have read this book many times; it's one of the few books I reread when I need a lift. I can open it to any page and start reading. As a result, my paperback copy is looking pretty mangy.

What Really Matters introduced me to people that I went on to read more about, especially Ram Dass and Ken Wilber. I enjoyed the chapter on *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain* because I owned Betty Edward's book and had already worked through her drawing exercises. Schwartz's drawing chapter, though novel, is not one I go back to.

What Really Matters, published in 1995, predates all the how-to-find-happiness theories that are flooding the bookstores and Internet now. But this old book feels more authentic than a slapped-together manifesto full of tips and tricks.

I am disappointed that Tony Schwartz has created a new career as a "do-better-at-your-job" motivational speaker. The few clips I've watched of him lecturing seem more schlubby than my image of an author who sincerely searched for wisdom as he researched people and paths that purported to have the answers.

Read it; you may find an answer or two.

Colleen says

I read this in 1999--a 'travelogue' through America, with the author interviewing major players of spiritual faiths. It was this book that introduced me to Ken Wilbur, a philosopher/psychologist from Boulder. He is deep "credited with developing a unified field theory of consciousness—a synthesis and interpretation of the world's great psychological, philosophical, and spiritual traditions." His books are heavy reading. I have yet to finish a book of his. Check him out at <http://in.integralinstitute.org/>.

Cyndi says

This book was great. It's a comprehensive analysis of just about every way Americans go about finding more wisdom, inner peace, enlightenment, self-awareness, and an overall more full life. The author took 5 years to interview experts and practice multiple scientific, psychological, religious, philosophical and even mystic disciplines in his own very personal search for more meaning in his life. The information he provides is extremely detailed and his analysis is right on the money. I've dog-eared multiple pages to re-read or to follow up by reading books by many of the experts he interviewed. I will read this one again and recommend it to everyone.

Sampath says

4.5 stars.

This book should have been named "A brief history of everything"!
No doubt a good read.
