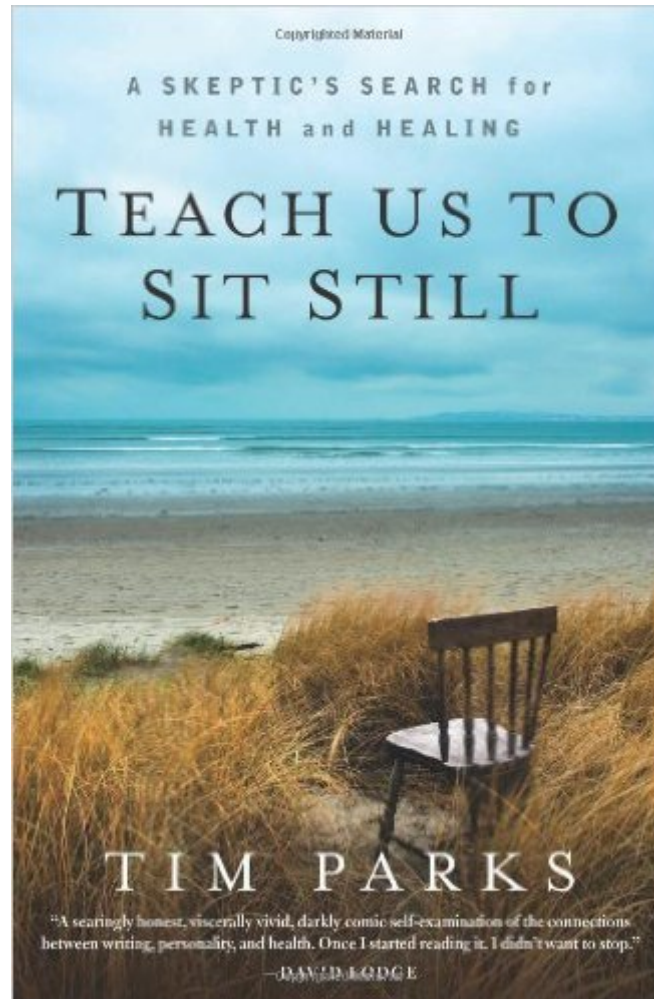


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Teach Us To Sit Still: A Skeptic's Search For Health And Healing



Synopsis

Teach Us to Sit Still is the visceral, thought-provoking, and inexplicably entertaining story of how Tim Parks found himself in serious pain, how doctors failed to help, and the quest he took to find his own way out. Overwhelmed by a crippling condition which nobody could explain or relieve, Parks follows a fruitless journey through the conventional medical system only to find relief in the most unexpected place: a breathing exercise that eventually leads him to take up meditation. This was the very last place Parks anticipated finding answers; he was about as far from New Age as you can get. As everything that he once held true is called into question, Parks confronts the relationship between his mind and body, the hectic modern world that seems to demand all our focus, and his chosen life as an intellectual and writer. He is drawn to consider the effects of illness on the work of other writers, the role of religion in shaping our sense of self, and the influence of sports and art on our attitudes toward health and well-being. Most of us will fall ill at some point; few will describe that journey with the same verve, insight, and radiant intelligence as Tim Parks. Captivating and inspiring, Teach Us to Sit Still is an intensely personal and brutally honest story for our times.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As someone who suffers from migraines and have experienced chronic pain, I was interested to read Tim Park's book about his odyssey to cure his persistent urinary problems. I have to admit that I was pretty squeamish reading some of his graphic descriptions of his physical problems. Fortunately, Parks found a holistic solution to his problems. Meditation and a healthy, low-key

lifestyle can be hard for so many of us to obtain. It goes against the grain of compulsive busyness that we use to justify our existence, sad to say. Parks is an excellent writer and his story is well-worth reading.

This book is a marvellous read. Not only has Tim Parks managed to write well about his struggles with chronic pelvic pain - he also manages to put the story into an exciting context based on his own work as a teacher and writer, as well as his roles as parent and husband. The story has numerous references to classic and modern books by famous writers. Parks weaves their stories into his own quest for answers and understanding. For anyone with an interest in literature and reading, these reflections are both well written and highly relevant. This really is NOT a book on meditation, however Parks shows how meditation helped him get rid of many of the symptoms through a rather heroic undertaking where he left no stone unturned. Being a fellow sufferer of CPPS (chronic pelvic pain syndrome), Tim Parks' book has given me many interesting ideas on how to continue the search for knowledge and insight. It is a difficult condition which has been largely ignored by doctors and researchers. Yet it is a crippling problem which causes a lot of agony for many people. Tim Parks argues, through exposure, that one reason why scientists struggle with identifying the underlying causes for CPPS is that it is mostly a symptomatic affliction which may be better understood if we look to our own way of handling life's many problems. If you do not suffer from CPPS the book may not be immediately relevant. Still, it is an excellent story told by a master storyteller.

Tim Parks is a successful writer who has written novels, nonfiction, and various magazine articles. Now he has written a unique memoir in which he is searching for a diagnosis or solution to mysterious pains and other physical symptoms no one can figure out. Rather than a sad, whiny, poor-ol'-me sort of memoir, this is honest, factual, and often funny. At first he thinks his terrible pain, urinary frequency and other symptoms are simply physical. Prostate is the first body part to come under suspicion of course, but when he finally sees a doctor and has tests, that suspicion doesn't pan out. He is very funny about the indignity of his symptoms and more so the tests. Then he fears he has cancer but that doesn't seem to be the case either. There is no physical diagnosis. He buys a book that helps some, but mostly convinces him that his lifelong constant tension and anxiety could be the problem. He tries therapy, massage, and finally retreats. What happens to his mind and his physical symptoms along the way is surprising but entirely believable. This guy doesn't just launch into possible solutions with enthusiasm; rather he drags himself into them with a hearty dose

of skepticism. He would be the first to detect quackery and denounce it. I loved his humor and the fact that the best thing he learned in this process was to be honest with himself. His wife was at first supportive, then bored with the whole thing, and then very happy with the new Tim Parks. I hadn't read anything by him previously, but I imagine his writing became much better, and took a whole new direction during his long search for a cure. Memoir lovers, this is for you. I think you'll find it unique among the other memoirs you've read.

This is an engaging testimonial to the power of meditation. It starts off slowly with a rather tedious recapitulation of the many ways in which the author sought to manage his illness. This includes a fair bit of self-indulgent story spinning, as the author tries to understand why this is happening to him. Fortunately for the reader, Parks is a published novelist and has the skills to keep his audience engaged, even when the material isn't all that interesting. It's not until the latter third that meditation begins and Parks discovers that his medical problems mostly fade away under the healing breath of awareness. More importantly, he finds that the stories he told about himself were just that, fantasies about a fantasy self. I found much of myself in Parks - disgust with religion, ignorance (even disregard) of the body, an ego built on skepticism and the packaging of experience with words. Many of his insights were also my own. This is a wonderful book for anyone who might be suffering from a chronic illness or experiencing a midlife reevaluation. It demonstrates how even the most hardened critical mind can be softened and awakened by applied awareness. Thank you, Mr Parks, for sharing your experience. For those interested in a follow-up, you might enjoy *The Quiet Mind*, an account of the enlightenment experience of Tim Parks' meditation instructor. For an engaging film on meditation among the physically incarcerated, see *Dhamma Brothers*.#

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