

**Q&A with Karen Casey, author of
*Each Day a New Beginning (40th Anniversary Edition): Daily Meditations for Women***

Millions of people around the world spend a few moments in quiet reflection with Karen Casey every day. Affectionately known as the Godmother of Women in Recovery, Karen is the best-selling author of *Each Day a New Beginning: Daily Meditations for Women*, the first daily meditation book written expressly for women in recovery from addiction.

An accomplished author, Karen has written 30 nonfiction works, including *Each Day a Renewed Beginning*, *52 Ways to Live the Course in Miracles*, *Let Go Now, In God's Care*, and *A Woman's Spirit*. She started her addiction recovery journey in 1974, and in 1982 her first book *Each Day a New Beginning* was published and quickly became a bestseller in this groundbreaking genre of meditation support for women in recovery. That revolutionary book has sold over 4 million copies and has a dedicated worldwide readership, spanning over four decades. Karen's focus as a writer is on the development of spiritual growth, and strengthening one's twelve-step recovery. She relies on her personal experience and her profound connection with the brave people she walks among in the rooms of AA and Al-Anon. This December she is celebrating the 40th Anniversary edition of *Each Day a New Beginning*, which includes a new Foreword by Marianne Williamson. Karen spends her time writing, and giving lectures and workshops, which foster her commitment to continue doing what brings her life such joy and peace. Her website is womens-spirituality.com.



Q: You mention in your bio that you took your first drink at 13-years old. What was going on that you felt drawn to alcohol? How did your own family influence who you became in life?

A: My family always felt distant. I was depressed from a young age, even though I didn't know what depression was. I desperately wanted to change how I felt and without consciously choosing to drink, when no one was watching at family reunion, I mixed a coke and whiskey and instantly loved how it changed how I saw the outer world. I had, by then, already been sexually abused by a distant family member, more than once, but didn't feel like I could share that with my parents. The escape I felt from alcohol offered real freedom from my fearful thoughts.

My family eventually became proud of who and what I did with my life, but I never felt their support while doing it. I "was the troublemaker" and actually succeeded in spite of them.

Q: Your first book, *Each Day a New Beginning* was published in December 1982 and you're now celebrating the 40th anniversary with a new edition. When you started writing, you said you didn't intend to write a book; you were just seeking connection with your soul, God, or Higher Power, so you started writing and having conversations with God. So how did your first book come about?

A: In my desperation to "know God" and to connect with Him the way my friends in AA did, I chose to sit quietly in a beat-up old recliner and listen to what I heard. I felt truly desperate. My friends seemed to have a freedom in their lives that was missing from mine. Of course I was struggling with chronic depression too, and at that time, AA disapproved of people taking medication for depression, for pain of any kind, actually. I feared my life would never change. Writing helped to calm me and I began to feel a connection with God while sitting in that old recliner. I didn't really envision that I was writing a book that would ever be read by other women. Frankly, I was just trying to save my life. God had another plan!

Q&A with Karen Casey, author of
Each Day a New Beginning (40th Anniversary Edition): Daily Meditations for Women

Q: Part of your story, after being sober for 18 months, is quite startling. You say it was an "Unexpected knock at your door" that truly changed your life. What happened that night you wanted to end it all?

A: My depression had immobilized me again. I had chosen to skip classes, even the classes I was teaching while in graduate school at the University of Minnesota, and my AA meetings. The idea of suicide had crossed my mind many times in the past. Even as a child I had thought about making myself disappear. But that night, in particular, without much thought and no fanfare, I rolled up all of my towels to tuck around the windows in my one bedroom apartment so the gas wouldn't escape. My plan was simple. Turn on the gas and let the rest take its course.

Before placing the towels, there was a knock at the door. I wasn't expecting anyone so ignored it initially. But it became more persistent. I finally said, "Who's there?" "Pat," was the reply. I was mystified. I opened the door a crack and a woman I had never seen before was standing there with her daily planner open to that day's date. She said we had an appointment to discuss my finances. Indeed, my name was in her book. She rather forcefully pushed her way in and then seemed to take notice of me. She asked if I was ok? I explained that I was a recovering alcoholic and feeling very hopeless. Her next words changed my life. "You are on the precipice of new spiritual growth," she said. "It's as though you are standing at the abyss looking down but God is reaching across saying come, take my hand. All will be ok." Suddenly, I knew she was speaking the truth I needed to hear. We talked a few more minutes and then she stood to leave. Not a word about finances was ever brought up. When she reached the door, she turned back toward me and said, "You will be fine. God is here, now and will always be." And she left. I never saw her again. I have never doubted that she was sent, that she was "an angel on assignment."

Q: You've been quoted as saying there are no "chance meetings." What do you mean by this?

A: I firmly believe we are all on a very specific journey and part of the plan is to intersect with those individuals from whom we can learn and, in the process, also serve as teachers. *We are "always in the right place at the right time," so the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous says.* And that idea comforts me. I embrace, wholeheartedly, the idea that there are no accidental visitors on our path. This idea keeps me more appreciative and on the lookout for what is being offered to me and what I can offer in return. Fear dissipates when I honor this belief.

Q: So do you believe in angels? And miracles?

A: I do believe we are always being "helped along our journey" by unseen, but very present souls who want to teach and guide us. I'm convinced that Pat was an angel on assignment. And I believe my mother always rode along with me as I rode cross-country on my Harley. We don't need to see all the helpers on our journey, and often they come unbidden. But help is always at hand.

I define a miracle as a shift in perception. I was introduced to this way of "seeing" from my 35 year study of *A Course in Miracles*. I wholeheartedly believe that my willingness to see a situation from a different perspective allows me to "see" with new eyes, thus have a new understanding. In that instant, everything changes, thus a miracle has transpired.

Q: Betty Ford, former First & Second Lady of the United States when her husband, Gerald Ford, was in office, was the founder of the renowned Betty Ford Clinic, wrote an endorsement for your first book. She wrote that "A woman with an alcohol or drug problem has a special problem." How is recovery different for women and men?

**Q&A with Karen Casey, author of
*Each Day a New Beginning (40th Anniversary Edition): Daily Meditations for Women***

A: For both genders, alcohol and or drugs prevents a person from living their best life. However, it's true that women drunks are looked down on in a way that men escape, unless they are living on the street, homeless. It's not uncommon for men to leave women who are struggling with alcohol as an issue, while women seldom walk out, often because of their need for financial support. There really isn't a reason that one gender has a worse problem but men are more readily ushered into treatment by employers. Women far too often don't receive that same support.

Q: The first edition of *Each Day a New Beginning* is credited to have started a new publishing genre, as previous to your book, there were no books specifically for women. You have been called the God Mother of Women's Recovery books. How did that change your life and writing?

A: I don't know that it did. I simply wrote what I was "called to write." That's always been true. Even my most recent book: *Each Day A Renewed Beginning: Meditations for a Peaceful Journey*, called me to the computer. My soul felt the need to connect with my Higher Power to calm my own nerves while living in the midst of the quarantine. I sat and the words flowed.

Q: Are all your books for women? Are they just for those in recovery?

A: My books are for all people, actually. I have heard wonderful stories from and about men who loved *Each Day A New Beginning*, never considering that it was only for women. I think my books appeal to people of all genders, and ages. They are soft in their approach and I think God meant them to appeal to anyone who was searching for hope, peace and direction. I know that's what I was searching for when I first sat down to write.

Q: You started out attending Al-Anon meetings, and have written much about co-dependency, having said that in most cases, those with addictions have more issues than just alcohol or drugs. Do you have a sense of what comes first, alcoholism or codependency?

A: I surely can't speak for everyone but in my case, I clearly was codependent before taking that first drink. My focus was always on what others were thinking about me and I was generally pretty desperate to get the attention of boys and then men. I was caught in the trap of trying to be what someone else wanted me to be or trying to change them so they'd like me as I was. Allowing others to define us is clearly a common definition of codependency. (And frankly, I personally think that every alcoholic could live a more peaceful life if he/she/they went to Al-Anon too.)

Q: You have a doctorate degree in Philosophy with an emphasis on Native American studies. How did your studies influence your life and spirituality?

A: I was preparing to write my dissertation when I got sober. I had reached a crisis in my life and knew I couldn't really commit myself to the long process of writing a dissertation unless other areas of my life changed. I didn't realize, at the time, that what I needed to do was stop drinking, but one thing led to another, and clarity took hold of me. My fascination with Native American Spirituality gave me new hope and it seemed to blend comfortably with the kind of spirituality AA introduced me to. I do believe there is One Spirit who guides us all.

Q: You also have a book *52 Ways to Live the Course in Miracles*. What brought you to study a Course in Miracles, which is a rather esoteric path?

A: My journey with the course began in 1981 when a sister-in-law sent the books to my husband and me. I was fascinated by Helen Schulman, the scribe's journey with the course and her own religious

**Q&A with Karen Casey, author of
*Each Day a New Beginning (40th Anniversary Edition): Daily Meditations for Women***

upbringing. Its emphasis on forgiveness as the pathway to peace of mind and its simple suggestion to be helpful, kind and examples of God's love in all encounters with others, appealed to me and offered me a far simpler way to navigate through life. My book *52 Ways* was my attempt at helping others find the joy that comes with living more intentionally.

Q: Among the 30 plus books you have written, is there one that stands out as the most crucial for readers?

A: I really can't answer that. It depends on where a person is in their own journey. But there is one theme that runs through most of them and it's this: let kindness be your constant companion.

Q: As you look to the future, what draws your attention most?

A: We seem to be living in extremely stressful times. The divisiveness and fear mongering is not like anything I've ever before experienced. Having a spiritual path that suggests I should keep my intention for the day small and thoughtful gives me peace of mind. I personally believe that any peaceful action anyone of us takes is multiplied immeasurably instantly. We each have the opportunity to make this a better universe moment by moment.

Q: Do you have any tips for people who are seeking to cultivate more peace in their lives?

A: This not mysterious. If you want more peace in your life, behave more peacefully within every encounter you have; nary a one of them is accidental.

AA Related

Q: What has been the most important aspect of your long-term recovery?

A: Being at peace and having a blueprint for living everyday are the gifts that stand out. I never have to wonder what's the best action to take. The principles of the program have spelled them out for me.

Q: There are so many types of 12-step meetings (Al-Anon for co-dependents, AA, NA (narcotics anonymous), Overeaters, Gamblers, Sex addicts, there's even meetings for entrepreneurs who have problems with finances. What is the common thread of these meetings?

A: I am personally only familiar with AA and Al-Anon but I do believe that all programs have adopted the 12 steps of AA as their guide line for living better lives. And I firmly believe that having a structure like is provided by the 12 steps, no one is ever at a loss for how to move forward when making choices about how to move through their day.

Q: You've shared in your books that despite being in recovery and going to Al-Anon and AA meetings for over 46 years, you are still drawn to meetings. And you attend or lead several each week. What keeps you coming back?

A: We are never done being alcoholic, thus we are never done with needing the constant reminders that going to meetings offers us. Also, being present for newcomers is terribly important. If no one had been there when I went to my first AA meeting on May 24, 1976, I'd most likely not be sober today. We have a saying in 12 step meetings: "to keep it you have to give it away." I cherish those words.