

What happens when the practices meant to ground and heal us are tested by the very human systems and people through which they are taught? In this deeply reflective and courageous work, Dr. Stephanie M. Romero invites readers into an intimate journey that begins as an academic exploration of mindfulness and unfolds into something far more personal. Bridging scholarship and lived experience, she examines how mindfulness, compassion, and social-emotional awareness can support not only individual well-being, but also our relationships, our communities, and the systems we inhabit.

But this is not a simple story of transformation. As her journey deepens, so too does her awareness of the complexities—and contradictions—within spiritual communities and institutions. With honesty and vulnerability, Romero shares the pain of disillusionment, the loss of trust, and the difficult process of reconciling meaningful teachings with the imperfections of those who carry them.

Rather than offering easy answers, this book holds space for the full spectrum of experience: insight and doubt, connection and rupture, healing and grief. It challenges readers to consider what it means to live with integrity in the face of imperfection—and how wisdom can endure, even when the structures around it falter.

Both a personal narrative and a thoughtful inquiry, this book is an invitation: to question, to feel, and to continue the search for what is true, trustworthy, and deeply human.

THE AWAKENED HEART OF A MINDFUL TEACHER:
A CONTEMPLATIVE EXPLORATION

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