

Comfort & Joy Reviews

From: Spirituality & Practice

Book Awards:

One of the Best Spiritual Books of 2008

By Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat

"Comfort is a shelter, a warm blanket, a refuge," writes Colette Lafia, a San Francisco-based writer, spiritual director, and educator who has served as the director of the C.A.R.E. (Center for the Advancement and Renewal of Educators). She sees comfort as a grace in our lives that we can open and receive as well as give to others. One of her favorite rituals to bring a sense of well-being is a bath. Others might point to reading in bed, listening to love songs, or eating popcorn at the movies.

Lafia salutes comfort clothes that "feel like another layer of skin," such as flannel shirts, loose pants, soft pajamas, or cotton T-shirts that have been stretched out over the years. Then there is the fine pleasure of singing a familiar song and giving ourselves up to the music. Or the good feelings that come with paging through old photo albums. Lafia writes: "As I look through the pages of one of the albums, the comfort of memory comes over me. I feel myself tracing my history, connecting the dots of my life."

Comfort and Joy, contains a treasure trove of simple and pleasurable delights that lend meaning to our daily lives. Giving comfort to ourselves and bringing comfort to others is what we call the spiritual practice of nurturing. Here are some of the other comforts the author savors on these pages:

- Napping
- Sinking into a pillow
- Rain
- Listening
- Solitude
- Talismans

About offering comfort to others, Lafia states:

"In all our daily relationships as a spouse, parent, relative, friend, colleague, and community member, there are many moments asking us to respond with tenderness, patience, encouragement, and reassurance. The more we cultivate comfort in our own lives, the more readily and freely we can bring these gifts to others."

Lafia concludes with a section called "Applying Comfort in Your Daily Life." Here is one example:

"For a day, notice all the little ways you can offer comfort. You might help someone cross the street, bring home an apple pie for dessert, make a donation to a charitable organization through their Web site, wait patiently while everyone gets into the car in the morning."

From: Amazon.com Review

By Janet Boyer (A Top 100 Reviewer)

"For me, it was not about constantly seeking new experiences for comfort, but in allowing the ordinary things in my daily life to fully resonate with the depth of comfort they had to offer. I have come to recognize that these daily experiences deepen over time, offering me the gift of comfort again and again." – Comfort & Joy

Insomnia, death of her sister to breast cancer, infertility--spiritual director and author Colette Lafia weathered life's storms through the warmth of everyday comforts.

In her book *Comfort and Joy*, Lafia's warm prose knits a cozy tapestry of vignettes, observations, affirmations and gentle questions covering the simple ways we can care for others and ourselves.

I spent this past leisurely spring Sunday with *Comfort and Joy* while sitting in a lounge chair in my back yard. (In fact, at the author's suggestion to take comfort in a nap, I decided that was a glorious idea--and fell asleep!) I felt a sense of camaraderie as Lafia shared some simple comforts that I, too, enjoy--namely, my pillow, circles, warm baths and comfy clothes.

From empty bowls to laughter, buttery toast to worn shoes, the author tenderly takes readers by the hand, pointing out the beautiful sights, sounds and feelings that are hiding in plain sight amidst even the roughest terrain. Lafia is one of those rare authors who feel like a friend--someone you'd love to meet for lunch or swing in the backyard with while talking about everything and nothing.

Here are some soothing passages from this 131-page softcover book:

On Walking:

"It is comforting to return to this trail again and again, to step on a soil that holds many moments of my life. Landscape is as interior as it is exterior, and in that dual relationship there is a deep, primal comfort."

On Napping:

"I find comfort in listening to my body and not pushing myself all the time. When I nap, I always remove my shoes and my watch. Even if I don't fall asleep, as soon as I shut my eyes, there is an instant relief in letting go and feeling my body stop in repose."

On Creating:

"The morning light begins to appear, gracefully and deliberately like a dancer. And in that mood of awakening, I am drawing without hesitation. Pure instinct. Trusting every mark--a smudge, a smear, thick dark lines, thin gray lines. The drawing is already in me as I open my hands to receive it."

On Applying Comfort in Your Daily Life:

"Receiving the presences of another person's tears is a great gift of comfort to give someone. Allow the person to cry, without judgment or interruptions. Let the tears become part of nature. Sometimes there's nothing to figure out, it just needs to rain tears."

Comfort and Joy would make a delightful gift for Mother's Day (or any holiday!), especially since this book encourages us to seek out the simple comforts of life to ease stress and replenish our spirits, as well as enter a space to receive the comforts others offer. Highly recommended!

(Janet Boyer is the author of *The Back in Time Tarot Book: Picture the Past, Experience the Cards, Understand the Present* (coming Fall 2008 from Hampton Roads Publishing)

From Midwestern Book Review

No matter how hardened one claims to be, no matter how tough a front one puts up, everyone needs some comfort and joy from time to time. "Comfort and Joy: Simple Ways to Care for Ourselves and Others" is a deftly written encouragement for everyone to do a little extra to make the world a better place. A profound and touching message, little things like a plush pillow, warm milk, the shoulder of a friend - all can make your loved ones feel better- and in the process, make yourself feel better as well. "Comfort and Joy: Simple Ways to Care for Ourselves and Others" is highly recommended to community library self-help collections - and anyone who wants to improve their own quality of life by improving others.

From AngelFire.com

"Comfort and Joy" – the title says it all! Most of us tend to make our personal welfare one of the last things that we attend to – putting work, family, friends, and the laundry first and foremost. Whoever knew that taking care of ourselves was a learned thing? And it really doesn't have to

be. There are many opportunities on a daily basis for each of us to comfort ourselves, and make a difference in our personal world, and in the world around us. When we comfort ourselves, it becomes that much easier to comfort those around us in a very real way.

This isn't a book of platitudes – it was born out of the genuine pain the author was experiencing in her own life – pain coming from the death of her sister due to cancer (at a relatively young age), to her realization that she was, on a very deep level, no longer satisfied with the work that she was doing, and her very real battle with insomnia.

Presented here is a collection of forty-five vignettes, drawn from the authors life, that show us how daily rituals, like drinking a cup of tea or coffee, can ground, center, and comfort us. Lafia starts out with a list of things that comfort her – at the top of her list is cinnamon toast. What wonderful memories that brings back! I still go there, from time to time, sometimes when things are good, but most often when they are bad. What does that tell me! I need to bring my comforts into my life on a more consistent basis!

In her introduction, Lafia refers to comfort as a refuge – a warm, comforting blanket that we draw around ourselves. It is there in so many ways – in a cup of coffee or tea, in our morning shower, in taking the time to admire the flowers in our yard. It is reaching out to others, listening to them patiently, honoring their lives. It is all of the little things in life – things that we can access by living a conscious, authentic life.

Some of the subjects that Lafia touches on in her vignettes include acceptance, calling, circles, cloths, creating, the garden, giving, holding, journaling, laughter, love, moments, prayer, rain, and reading. Each vignette includes a short personal story, a short paragraph on how to cultivate a specific comfort, and a few words about what each comfort is in your life.

The second section is focused on remembering comfort, and how Lafia came to recognize it in her life.

The third section is focused on bringing comfort into the world – noting when others need comfort, recognizing in what way they need it, and offering it to them.

The fourth section is focused on applying comfort in your daily life. This section is a gift to her readers, because it makes not of things that we all recognize, but often fail to pay attention to.

“Comfort and Joy” will make a profound difference in your life, and in the lives of those around you. It is not meant to be read from page one to page one hundred and thirty-one – it is meant to fill a need at a given moment (from my point of view, not the author's), and those needs will change from moment to moment. I feel so strongly about this book that I am including it in a list of reference books that I include in my work on feminine personal empowerment. Read this material for yourself, and see what you come away with!