

BEHIND THE PAGES

*A conversation
with author
Melody Beattie*



2003

HAZELDEN WRITERS SERIES



MELODY
BEATTIE

52 Weeks of Conscious Contact

was born in Tibet. I made two trips to China and Tibet and climbed the sacred mountains. In my travels, I was struck again and again by the thought of how **UNHAPPY** so many people are in our country despite having so much, and how **HAPPY** the people of Tibet are when they have so little. I realized that the difference is in the **PRACTICE OF PRINCIPLES** that make us happy. So, this is a book of practice and of living out our principles more than it is a meditation book.



Today Melody Beattie is a household name, and you have such a loyal following. How did this all come about? Why did you write your first book?

The first book that I'm known for is *Codependent No More*. Sometimes I hear people say, "Oh, she was just jumping on the **SELF-HELP** bandwagon when she wrote *Codependent No More*." What they don't realize is that there wasn't a self-help bandwagon at that time. There wasn't even a self-help section in bookstores.



When I **HIT THE WALL** in my own life with this codependency stuff, there wasn't anything out there in terms of support or information. Taking care of yourself, setting personal boundaries—these ideas weren't even in our vocabulary at that time. I made a vow to myself that if I was ever able to dig myself out of the hole that I was in, I would try to help others get out.

Codependent No More is where **THE DOORMAT STANDS UP** and says, "I'm really a human being here." It's about understanding your personal power and taking care of yourself. It was the start of a revolution for a lot of people—and for myself.



I had no clue when I wrote the book that so many people were in the same place as I had been. No idea. You always feel so alone and isolated when you're going through problems in life.

Do you have a favorite book that you've written?

Each of the books I've written has its own distinct personality and life. And writing each book is like going through pregnancy and delivery.



My most magical book has been *The Language of Letting Go*. More than my other books, this book **TOOK ON ITS OWN LIFE**. It was very interactive writing.



When I wrote that book, I would find myself in a certain situation or I would have some kind of experience that would make me think, “Okay, now what am I to learn from this? What am I to do with this?” The book **JUST DANCED WITH ME**—or I danced with it.

The result was a primer, a very practical meditation book. *The Language of Letting Go* is about what recovery from codependency looks like in **DAILY LIFE**, and what people can do day-to-day to make recovery work in their lives.

Your books are deeply personal. Is it difficult to expose yourself like that?

Playing It by Heart is a biography. It’s about **TELLING MY LIFE STORY**. Even though I didn’t really want to but I felt it was time. I didn’t like the whole ego-biography thing—putting the person before the ideas. But I have seen that sometimes the **MOST POWERFUL HEALING** happens when people hear another person’s story. They can say, “She’s an alcoholic, too” or, “She’s a junkie, too.” It’s healing.



What is the writing process like for you?

You go into an altered reality when you write. It demands **TOTAL PRESENCE**. That's what I love about writing. I loved writing when I made 25 dollars a story for a local newspaper, and I love writing now. I want to write until the day I die. It is my hope and prayer that I can do that.



I just love to read. I read wherever I am. On an airplane. On vacation. Even when I'm not feeling well—that's the best because **YOU CAN JUST READ AND READ** and never leave the couch. Even the books I use for research. I love to read.

I hope people don't lose their love of books.

STORYTELLERS today and in the past have an ancient, almost **SPIRITUALLY APPOINTED** place in culture. Stories change people's lives. Books change people's lives. I hope we don't lose our storytellers and our story readers.

A large, elegant handwritten signature of Melody Beattie in black ink.



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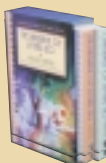
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