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The Cow in the Parking Lot: A Zen Approach to Overcoming Anger

Susan Edmiston, Leonard Scheff

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The Cow in the Parking Lot: A Zen Approach to Overcoming Anger Susan Edmiston, Leonard Scheff Road rage. Domestic violence. Professionally angry TV and radio commentators. We're a society that is swimming in anger, always about to snap. Leonard Scheff, a trial attorney, once used anger to fuel his court persona, until he came to realize just how poisonous anger is. That and his intense study of Buddhism and meditation changed him. His transformation can be summarized in a simple parable: Imagine you are circling a crowded parking lot when, just as you spot a space, another driver races ahead and takes it. Easy to imagine the rage. But now imagine that instead of another driver, a cow has lumbered into that parking space and settled down. The anger dissolves into bemusement. What really changed? You?your perspective.

Using simple Buddhist principles and applying them in a way that is easy for non-Buddhists to understand and put into practice, Scheff and Edmiston have created an interactive book that helps readers change perspective, step by step, so that they can replace the anger in their lives with a newfound happiness. Based on the successful anger management program Scheff created, *The Cow in the Parking Lot* shows how anger is based on unmet demands, and introduces the four most common types?Important and Reasonable (you want love from your partner); Reasonable but Unimportant (you didn't get that seat in the restaurant window); Irrational (you want respect from a stranger); and the Impossible (you want someone to fix everything wrong in your life).

Scheff and Edmiston show how, once we identify our real unmet demands we can dissolve the anger; how, once we understand our "buttons," we can change what happens when they're pushed. He shows how to laugh at ourselves?a powerful early step in changing angry behavior. By the end, as the reader continues to observe and fill in the exercises honestly, it won't matter who takes that parking space?only you can make yourself angry.

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