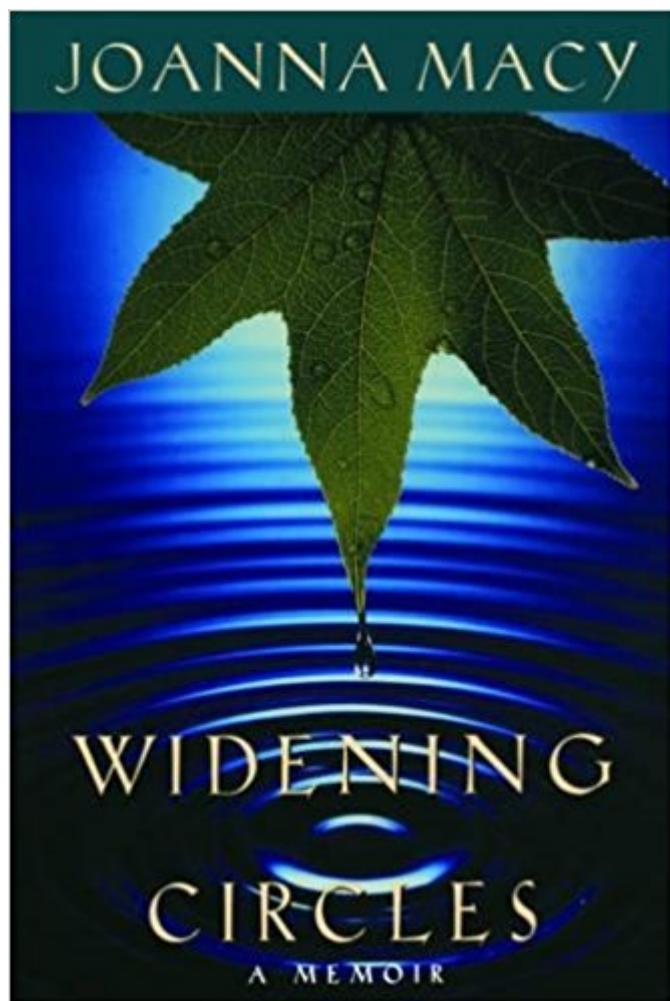


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# Widening Circles: A Memoir



## **Synopsis**

In this absorbing memoir, well-known eco-philosopher, Buddhist scholar, and deep ecology activist /teacher Joanna Macy recounts her adventures of mind and spirit in the key social movements of our era. Macy's autobiography reads like a novel as she relates her multi-faceted life experiences and reflects on how her marriage and family life enriched her service to the world.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Macy has traveled widely and lived deeply: she is an "eco-philosopher" and a scholar of Buddhism. Now more than 70, she writes about her life very engagingly, from the maple tree she loved as a child on her grandfather's farm to her current home in the Bay Area; from India and Africa to Tibet, Sri Lanka, and Washington, D.C. She tells of her controlling father, her love of study, her marriage and children, and her lovers and friends, but above all, she reflects on her life as a spiritual journey that embraces grace, Buddhist practice, and the sacred power of words. Her voice is warm, and her message--that love can endure, that the deepest hurts can heal, and that care for the environment is not only possible but necessary--suffuses all she writes. For those unable to attend one of her workshops on deep ecology or Buddhism, this memoir offers a glimpse and a taste. GraceAnne DeCandidoCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In this absorbing, and sometimes thrilling memoir, well-known eco-philosopher, Buddhist scholar,

and deep ecology activist /teacher Joanna Macy recounts her adventures of mind and spirit in the key social movements of our era. Macy's autobiography reads like a novel as she relates her multi-faceted life experiences and reflects on how her marriage and family life enriched her service to the world. Macy's formative years with an abusive father and oppressed mother set her on an irrevocable path of self-definition and independence. A short-lived stint with the CIA exposed Macy first hand to the Cold War's darkest threats: the construction of the hydrogen bomb and the building of the Berlin Wall. With three children in tow, Macy and her husband traveled with the Peace Corps to Africa, India, and Tibet, where her encounter with the Dalai Lama and Buddhism led to Macy's life-long embrace of the religion and a deep commitment to the peace and environmental movements. In *Widening Circles*, the unique synthesis of spiritualism and activism that define Macy's contribution to the world are illuminated by the life-events and experiences that have paved her uncommon path. *Widening Circles* has been made available through New Catalyst Books. New Catalyst Books is an imprint of New Society Publishers, aimed at providing readers with access to a wider range of books dealing with sustainability issues by bringing books back into print that have enduring value in the field. For more information on New Catalyst Books click [here](#). (2007-05-30)

Joanna Macy is a beautiful soul. I feel blessed I had the opportunity to read about her journey. I take her as my teacher and aspire to live as fluidly as she managed to.

Amazing life...from beginning to end, I was taking each step with her....I also enjoy her website and lecture series on You Tube.

thank you

fine condition

Joanna writes using all of the senses to 'catch' the reader's interest. I am inspired to say the least by her journey, her response to it and her willingness to share so candidly.

A compelling read about and by one of the leading lights of our time. Not only does Joanna Macey's journey inspire the reader, it is a reminder that passion and curiosity is the fuel for greatness. This book covers an astonishing array of subjects, but in such a personal, warm way, one is drawn along as a friend into matters profound and current. A beautiful, accessible book!

Joanna Macy is certainly a leading light of this century, particularly in the areas of eco-activist-philosophy and engaged Buddhist practice. I'd heard of her, and heard her speak, before, but her memoir really helped me appreciate her and her work much more. It is really an autobiography, and as such, starts off rather slowly and often inserts mundane narrative detail (such as a bird stealing a piece of bread from her mouth in India); but the last sections dealing with her growing ecological awareness and her workshops including the "Council of All Beings" helped me visualize a way to help people get out of their egocentric/species-centric viewpoints and really understand the world and environment from different perspectives. This book, and her work, should be essential reading for anyone interested in environmental and ecological issues, and particularly nuclear waste issues. Well worth the effort, despite the slow start. Thank you, Joanna Macy.

I read this book because I had already found 'World as Lover, World as Self' to be inspiring. Joanna Macy's combination of Buddhism, general systems theory and deep ecology seems to 'fit' for me, but here it is her sheer humanity that impresses most. In this memoir she is not afraid to lay open her weaknesses as well as her strengths, her questions as well as her answers. While her story ends in Bodh Gaya, the Indian site of the Buddha's awakening, what struck me most was the distance Macy had travelled to get there - a whole lifetime of journeying, and seventy years of a dramatically changing world to negotiate. A common thread through many of these years is Macy's opposition to the nuclear military/industrial complex, from her two years employment with the CIA and its culture of 'tough-mindedness' (p.65), to her visit to the people of Novozybkov, poisoned by Chernobyl, her insistence on the need to recognise, express and work through grief is constant. Her ability to guide people through despair to empowerment is a highly significant contribution to the world. To read the story of her life is to see how it can be possible to live without cynicism and with hope intact in the nuclear age. Since I had not read 'Coming Back to Life', Macy's nuclear guardianship project was new to me, and I found it extremely brave and moving. Another thread that runs through Macy's life story is the development of an authentic spirituality. Macy says 'the widening circles of my life have not had as their center the Big Papa God of my preacher forebears. I walked out on that belief when I was twenty'. (p. 277) Despite leaving formal Christianity, she tells of how she 'failed as an atheist' and of her many adventures with Buddhism. These range from the intellectual adventure of studying 'dependent co-arising' to the practical adventures of being thrown out of Sri Lanka and, later, trying to smuggle herself into Tibet illegally. Macy seems too much of a free spirit to sign on the dotted line of any religion, and she is able here to critique as well as praise

aspects of Buddhism as she has encountered it. A quote on the back cover of the book is worth repeating: 'A gem for all young people seeking to create a life of meaning, passion and purpose'. I would endorse this, and widen it to include the not-so-young. Its interesting that much of what Macy is known for today was achieved only after her fortieth birthday...

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