



独家引进，全球热销 8,000 万册

心灵鸡汤

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Chicken Soup for the Nature Lover's Soul

Jack Canfield
Mark Victor Hansen
Steve Zikman

H319.4
Y268
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江苏工业学院图书馆
藏书章

Jack Canfield
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安徽科学技术出版社



Health Communications, Inc.

[皖] 版贸登记号: 1201257

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

心灵鸡汤. 亲近大自然/(美)坎费尔德(Canfield, J.)等
编著. —合肥: 安徽科学技术出版社, 2005. 5

ISBN 7-5337-3210-3

I. 心… II. 坎… III. 英语-语言读物, 故事
IV. H319.4: I

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2004)第 121765 号

*

安徽科学技术出版社出版

(合肥市跃进路 1 号新闻出版大厦)

邮政编码: 230063

电话号码: (0551) 2833431

E-mail: yougoubu@sina.com

yougoubu@hotmail.com

网址: www.ahstp.com.cn

新华书店经销 合肥义兴印务有限责任公司印刷

*

开本: 889×1194 1/32 印张: 11 字数: 360 千

2006 年 4 月第 2 次印刷

印数: 5 000

定价: 20.00 元

(本书如有倒装、缺页等问题, 请向本社发行科调换)



Acknowledgments

The path to *Chicken Soup for the Nature Lover's Soul* has been made all the more beautiful by the many "companions" who have been there with us along the way. Our heartfelt gratitude to:

Our families, who have been chicken soup for our souls!

Inga, Christopher, Oran and Kyle Canfield, and Travis and Rileigh Mahoney for all their love and support.

Patty, Elisabeth and Melanie Hansen, for once again sharing and lovingly supporting us in creating another book.

Rob, for his sweet loving on each step of the trail. To Steve's parents, Thelma and Joel Zikman, for being there at every twist and turn with open hearts. To Steve's sisters, Janice Gritti and Susan Zikman, to Revo Gritti and Steven Wise, and to his nephews and nieces—Josh, Justin, Michael, Karissa, Meredith, Baylee and Rebecca—for all their joy and laughter.

Sandra and Desmond Fung, for their gentle support. To Lisa Carnio, for sharing the path with unconditional love, even from afar. And a special hug of loving thanks to Barbara Freeman and Lea Freeman, for their constant inspiration and wisdom.

Our publisher Peter Vegso, for his vision and commitment to bringing *Chicken Soup for the Soul* to the world.

Heather McNamara and Tasha Boucher, for producing our final manuscript with magnificent ease, finesse and care. Thanks





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Chicken Soup for the Nanny's Soul

for making the final stages of production such a breeze!

Leslie Riskin, for her care and loving determination to secure our permissions and get everything just right.

Nancy Autio, Barbara Lomonaco and Gretchen Stadnik, for nourishing us with truly wonderful stories and cartoons.

D'ette Corona, for being there to answer any questions along the way.

Patty Aubery, for being there on every step of the journey, with love, laughter and endless creativity.

Maria Nickless, for her enthusiastic marketing and public-relations support and a brilliant sense of direction.

Patty Hansen, for her thorough and competent handling of the legal and licensing aspects of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books. You are magnificent at the challenge!

Laurie Hartman, for being a precious guardian of the *Chicken Soup* brand.

Veronica Romero, Teresa Esparza, Jesse Ianniello, Russ Kamalski, Robin Yerian, Stephanie Thatcher, Jody Emme, Trudy Marschall, Michelle Adams, Dee Dee Romanello, Shanna Vieyra, Lisa Williams, Gina Romanello, Brittany Shaw, Dena Jacobson, Tanya Jones, Mary McKay and David Coleman, who support Jack's and Mark's businesses with skill and love.

Bret Witter, Lisa Drucker, Allison Janse and Susan Heim, our editors at Health Communications, Inc., and their assistant Kathy Grant, for their devotion to excellence.

Terry Burke, Tom Sand, Lori Golden, Kelly Johnson Maragni, Randee Feldman, Patricia McConnell, Kim Weiss, Paola Fernandez-Rana, Elisabeth Rinaldi and Pat Holdsworth, the marketing, sales, administration and PR departments at Health Communications, Inc., for doing such an incredible job supporting our books.

Tom Sand, Claude Choquette and Luc Jutras, who manage

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



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year after year to get our books translated into thirty-nine languages around the world.

The art department at Health Communications, Inc., for their talent, creativity and unrelenting patience in producing book covers and inside designs that capture the essence of *Chicken Soup*: Larissa Hise Henoch, Lawna Patterson Oldfield, Andrea Perrine Brower, Anthony Clausi and Dawn Von Strolley Grove.

Our tag team of associate editor interns for learning and for teaching, including Thuy Banh, Shari Barlia, Dena Bess, Jennifer Cecil, Cheryl Cheng, Carsten Cheung, Tabby Davoodi, Rebecca Elliott, Trina Enriquez, Michele Fitts, Emmy Gilliam, Cyndy Glucksman, Christine Guluzian, Jeanie Kim, Kim Kirkendall, Karen Lease, Eugene Lee, Marisha McGaffee, Melissa McKeown, Stephanie Neifing, Jung Park, Tammy Park, Jennifer Prakash, Sarah Pross, Krithana Ramisetti, Cindy Teruya, Lisa Turner, Chaniga Vorasarun, and Carrey Wong.

All the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* coauthors, who make it such a joy to be part of this *Chicken Soup* family.

Our glorious panel of readers who helped us make the final selections and made invaluable suggestions on how to improve the book: Fred Angelis, Madonna Auffant, Lisa Baker, Linda Beckwith, Dennis Berk, Cathy Calato, Lynette Charters, Nan and Jake Currie, Jack Dawson, Pim Dodge, Lorraine Drown, Julie Easton, Cory Fisher, Shirlee Fitleberg, Robert Fung, Donald Gurley, Le Anne Harper, Kitty Howe, Sylvia Hribar, Danny Kamen, Laurie Kinerk, Renee King, Dennis Lewis, Jean Marie Maxwell-Foote, Simone McGaffee, Carmen McKee, Kristie McLean, Ron Nielsen, Stasha Pozman, Mimi Richards, Kim Rosenthal, Donna Schilder, Gila Shapiro, and Susan Zikman. Your feedback was a gift!

Terry Moore, for his determined attitude and a renewed sense for the adventure, beauty and fragility of life. Terry was an avid outdoorsman and writer who was a great inspiration during the





course of putting together this collection. He died of cancer at thirty-two, leaving behind his wife, Suzy, and their two young sons, Ben and Brett.

The many extraordinary organizations and publications that helped spread the good word about this book, including: *www. GORP. com*, Jeff Beckham at *www. greatoutdoors. com*, Tim Hamill at *www. alloutdoors. com*, Jeff Blumenfeld at *Expedition News*, Irene Rawlings and Angela Keane at *Mountain Living* magazine, Walter Rivers at *Big Sky Journal*, Bill Thompson III at *Bird Watcher's Digest*, Dave Pegg and Alison Osius at *Climbing Magazine*, Tom Shealey and Jim Gorman at *Backpacker*, Steve Madden and Ellen Wagner Carpenter at *Outdoor Explorer*, Emma Kendell at *On Your Bike* magazine, Denise Damiano Mikics at *New Jersey Outdoors*, and Dennis C. Knickerbocker at *Michigan Out-of-Doors*.

South African Airways and Marcus Brewster Publicity, for helping us reach places afar.

Janice Lasko and Kay Peterson at *Escapees* magazine, Eugene Buchanan at *Paddler*, Jessica Riback at *Sports Afield*, Jim Seymour at the American Canoe Association, Michele Jin at *Passionfruit*, Tracy Puckett at *Outdoors Unlimited*, Tony Stucker at *Trips* magazine, Wendy Ballard at *Doggone*, Ann Wallace at *TravelScoop*, June Kikuchi at *WildBird*, Barbara Leonard at *Trailer Life*, Brenda Steiner at *Lively Times*, Corey Schlosser-Hall of Wilderness Inquiry, Deborah Weirick at Children Affected by AIDS Fund, Roger Brunt at the North American School of Outdoor Writing, Jody Newman of the League of American Bicyclists, and Page Crosland at *Rails to Trails*.

Andrea Lagomarsino at O. A. R. S., Peter Grubb at *River Odysseys West*, Brian Konradt at *Freelancing for Money*, Kathy Ptacek at *Gila Queen's Guide to Markets*, Marshall Whitfield at *www. writersmarketplac. com* and Nicole Bishop at *www. writerfind*.



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com.

Ryan Mucatel at Alan Taylor for T. E. A. M. Challenge, Blue Magruder at Earthwatch, Brett Harvey at the American Society of Journalists and Authors, Beverly Hurley at the Midwest Travel Writers Association, Joyce Banaszak at Minneapolis Writers Workshop, Bradley Kirkland at the Writers Club, Amber Vogel at the *Journal of African Travel Writing*, Ishbel Moore at the Canadian Authors Association, Eileen King at Outdoors Unlimited and the Outdoor Writers Association of America, Cathy Kerr at the Society of American Travel Writers, Penny Porter of the Society of Southwestern Authors, and James Plouf at *www.Travelwriters.com*.

And, most of all, thanks to everyone who submitted their heartfelt stories, poems, quotes and cartoons for possible inclusion in this book. While we were not able to use everything you sent in, we know that each word came from a magical place flourishing within your outdoor soul. May the spirit of nature carry you gently toward peace.

Because of the size of this project, we may have left out the names of some people who contributed along the way. If so, we are sorry, but please know that we really do appreciate you very much. We are truly grateful and love you all.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS





Introduction

*Everybody needs beauty as well as bread,
Places to play in and pray in,
Where nature may heal and
Give strength to body and soul alike.*

John Muir

Nature has always been my sanctuary. A couple of summers ago, I was desperate for a break and decided to head up to Canada where I grew up. I thought carefully about what I wanted to do and came up with the perfect three-pronged prescription.

First stop: Algonquin Park, three hours north of Toronto. It's the quintessential Canadian experience—5,000 square kilometers of remote lakes, linked by often-grueling portages.

Rob and I picked up our gear at Algonquin Outfitters. Bill Swift started the business in the early '70s, and the sign in his office said it all: "If you are grouchy, irritable or just plain mean, there will be a \$10 charge for putting up with you." It was actually an apt description of old Bill himself, who had



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recently passed away and whose son Rich was now running the shop along with his wife, his mom and a battalion of outdoor enthusiasts. They decked us out with everything we would need for our five-day trip: food, tents, sleeping bags and, of course, a lightweight Kevlar canoe.

While I had been paddling since I was a boy, it was Rob's first canoe adventure. We put in at Canoe Lake and, with each stroke, forged a watery path into the wilderness, cutting our ties to the stresses of everyday life. At the far end of the lake, we carried the canoe and our packs on the first of many portages from one body of water to the next—ten lakes in all, plus myriad creeks and swamps with names like Otterslide Creek, Big Trout Lake and Grassy Bog. By day, we steered past blue heron, beaver dams and bullfrogs. At night, we slept under shooting stars and the Big Dipper. We endured rain, cold, mud and mosquitoes, but by the time we made it back to the shores of Canoe Lake, we were refreshed and revitalized. Nature does that.

Our next stop was Killarney Mountain Lodge on the uppermost tip of Georgian Bay in northern Ontario. Our hosts, Jennifer East and her parents, Maury and Annabelle, built this easygoing retreat in the 1960s and have managed to retain its rustic charm. We spent three days at Killarney, enjoying the surrounding natural beauty at a much more relaxed pace.

With Captain Bob and his wife Diane, we sailed on the forty-six-foot yacht, *Stormy Night*, taking in views of Killarney Ridge and the spectacular La Cloche Range of rugged, pink granite and shining, white quartzite. We were told that this is the only place on Earth where one can find striped maple trees.

We disembarked on Philip Edward Island in West Des-





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jardins Bay where we hiked the Chickinishing Trail and painted watercolors of the windswept pine trees that grace the landscape. In the boat's guest book, I read an entry from a woman named Susan: "Ran from civilization and found true beauty here." Nature does that.

Our final stop was Toronto where we explored the city's wide array of green space: ravines replete with raccoons, birds and squirrels, a fresh herb garden on the roof of the seventy-five-year-old Fairmont Royal York Hotel, and the forty-acre waterfront Music Garden opened by Yo-Yo Ma and inspired by undulating riverscapes, wildflower meadows and forest groves of wandering trails. Nature does that.

Nature presents itself in a variety of forms, and we can connect with its many wonders in myriad ways. From the serene to the very extreme, each story in this book is about that essential connection. Whether you are scaling a summit, camping with friends, floating peacefully along the river's edge or resting in a hammock in your own backyard, nature offers incomparable moments of exhilaration and adventure, beauty and awe, serenity and healing.

As you read each story in this book, we hope that you too will be inspired to get out there and savor all that Mother Nature presents.

Steve Zikman



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POWERFUL PLACES

If we can somehow retain places where we can always sense the mystery of the unknown, our lives will be richer.

Sigurd F. Olson

