

A person wearing a blue hoodie is crouching in the center of a dark, narrow hallway. The walls are made of wood paneling, and there are handrails on both sides. A thick plume of white smoke or steam rises from the person's head, partially obscuring the text above. The lighting is dramatic, with the person and the smoke being the brightest elements in the scene.

**YOU,
WHO YOU ARE,
AND WHY YOU MATTER**

NEIL DEUCHAR

You, Who You Are, And Why You Matter

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and electronic.

About the author



Neil was born and bred in London, of Scottish ancestry. On leaving school he drifted but ended up making it into medical school and qualified as a doctor in 1984. He then suffered mental health problems and a brief spell of homelessness, following which he felt the best thing to do would be to use these experiences by training to become a psychiatrist. He retired from a successful career in the NHS in 2013, became involved in charity work for homeless people, studied theology and religion, became an interfaith minister, and now teaches interfaith studies in London. His three children have all now left home and while Neil currently lives in Stratford upon Avon, continuing voluntary work with people suffering mental social and addictions problems, he's interested in living in an Indian ashram to explore a more spiritual and simple kind of life for a while.

About the book

This book explores how we should view our priorities in the increasingly hectic and fast changing, yet ever smaller, world in which we live.

It has been written with younger people at heart, those of us asking questions about our place in the world and how we might better live our lives in a manner that minimises stress and helps us to be valued by our peers by helping others to help themselves.

The book provides insights into sources of harmony within our lives that we can use to maintain our moral compass and improve our decision-making.

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Introduction

*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful
committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s
the only thing that ever has”.*

Margaret Mead
(American anthropologist, 1901- 1978)

The world is in a complete mess and needs to be made a better place. We both know it. But how do we describe this mess? What do we say to people when we stand up and say: “this can’t go on and we’re going to do something about it!”

Ok – let’s make a start. Here are five killer facts that justify you and I getting fired up and ready for action:

1) The few thousand richest people on the planet own about half as much money as the three billion (that’s three thousand million) poorest people on the planet. The rest of us are just cogs in the machinery that creates and sustains this unequal distribution of wealth. That machinery is called capitalism and I’ll tell you more about why it’s so wrong and how it takes advantage of most of us a bit later on. For the moment, though, just know that we live in a horrendously unequal world and most of us unwittingly carry on contributing to it. Why is this important? Because if you’re working class or unemployed and on benefits you probably won’t live as long as someone who is well off or professional or upper class. Inequality kills people ... hundreds of them every day. And the gap between the haves and the have-nots, in the UK and across the world, is getting bigger.

2) Charity and the welfare state, noble as they appear to be, will not, ever, sort out the problem, because they rely on inequality – those who are able sorting out those who are needy ... those who have giving handouts to those who don’t have. It puts everyone in their place and keeps them there. Charity sounds like a good thing, but it benefits the rich because they can afford it and it makes them feel better about themselves and injures the poor because they don’t have any choice about it and feel belittled by it. If you’re on benefits, you may think you wouldn’t have access to money, work or accommodation if it weren’t for the people who administer the welfare state... but then neither would they, would they? And those working in the system have much nicer lives than those who have to depend on it. Why is this important? Because charity and welfare maintain divisions between people and

therefore actually contribute to inequality, and inequality kills people ... hundreds of them every day. And charity is going global.

3) Everything we see and hear is designed in some way by powerful people to put the rest of us in our place and keep us there so we all just keep going along with what a small number of powerful people want. This is called hegemony – the domination of one group over everyone else. Hegemony happens in education (teachers tell a larger group of pupils what's what to keep everyone in their place), politics (politicians use policies no one understands to keep everyone in their place), the establishment (professional types like doctors and lawyers use expert knowledge from which others are excluded to keep everyone in their place), religion (priests use holiness to keep everyone in their place), the state (the police and armed forces use command and control to keep everyone in their place), the media (TV and newspaper editors control what goes into the media to keep everyone in their place) and business (most of the world's money is controlled by a very small number of people who keep everyone in their place). It's all one-way traffic from the powerful down to the powerless, an appalling pattern of elite groups protecting a dominant position. It happens over and over again throughout history, and it keeps on happening. Why is this important? Because hegemony maintains inequality, and inequality kills people ... hundreds of them every day. And hegemony grows stronger every time it needs to.

4) The world is at war and people are dying. In the last 100 years alone, we've managed to kill about 200 million of each other in various wars. That's about two million people every year, about five and half thousand every day, the equivalent of about 70 double-decker busses being wiped out every day. The reason why people go to war is because there's something they want to control or there's something they don't want controlled. It could be money, religious belief, territory or dictatorship, but the people actually dying don't usually know why they're dying – they've been brainwashed with what those in control want them to

believe and they kill each other because they believe what they've been told. Why is this important? Because if everyone said, "I don't accept a word of what you're trying to tell me and I'm certainly not going to get killed or kill anyone else on your behalf", then the world would be a much safer place. Instead, war kills people ... hundreds of them every day. And it's getting worse.

5) Capitalism is destroying every nook and cranny of the planet. Cars, houses and factories spew out fumes that damage the atmosphere, so it lets too much sun in and the resulting global warming makes the polar ice caps melt. As well as the extinction of about a million species of animals so far from droughts and fires, sea levels are predicted to rise by a couple of feet by the end of this century. About 100 million people live on land that is less than three feet above sea level. The biggest impact will be felt in Africa and Asia, which contain most of what are sometimes referred to as developing countries. Developing countries tend to be poor, so global warming is a serious threat to them because they don't have the resources to cope with it. Why are people living in these countries so poor? Because of capitalism. The world's wealth is owned by a relatively few people who don't share it, so billions of people are excluded from it. And where is all this wealth? It's in the banks, houses, cars and factories of the rich and successful in countries like the US and the UK. Ownership of wealth is the hallmark of the economic system of capitalism. Why is this important? Because capitalism is responsible for inequality, feeds charity, depends on hegemony, funds wars and is the way those who have money control those who do not.

Happiness depends on our deciding for ourselves what sort of life we're going to live. Even if it's not the example or expectations set for us by society, by our school-friends, by what we see on the TV or hear in songs or may be by how our parents seem to behave, we should have a choice about who we are and how we want to be. But we don't realize it. We are owned, tricked and controlled by the system instead of seeing ourselves as individuals. We have little power compared to those few who are in control. And there