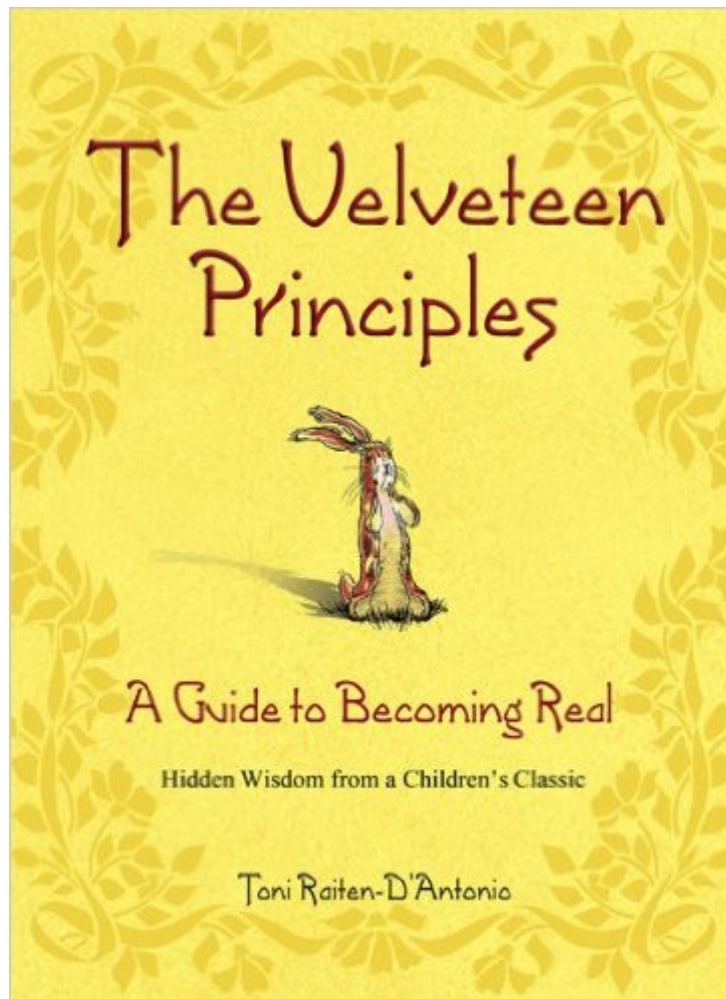


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The Velveteen Principles: A Guide To Becoming Real Hidden Wisdom From A Children's Classic



Synopsis

In the tradition of *The Tao of Pooh*, a noted therapist shows how the wisdom of a children's classic can lead to a life of love, fulfillment and purpose. Who wouldn't want to go back to when life was simple and a stuffed animal could fix all your problems? Botox parties. Extreme Makeovers. "Reality" TV. These are just some examples of how we have lost sight of something so basic yet so essential to true happiness: On our way to becoming status-seeking super-humans, we forgot how to be Real. This charming gift book guides readers down a simple path to reclaiming joy, fulfillment and individuality, using an unconventional source-the children's classic *The Velveteen Rabbit*. By sharing the timeless insights and poignant quotes from the popular children's book, the author identifies 10 keys to becoming Real, with the promise that when you become Real you will love and be loved with all your strengths, weakness, faults and gifts. As the Skin Horse explains to the Velveteen Rabbit: "Real isn't how you are made . . . It's a thing that happens to you. . . . Generally by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes droop and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But those things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand." Destined to be a classic in its own right, *The Velveteen Principles* delivers a simple yet profound message for the ages.

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Customer Reviews

I found this book almost by mistake, and when it arrived I began reading immediately. It is one of the first books in a long time that I was compelled to read in one sitting. Author Toni Raiten-D'Antonio's writing is clear, compassionate, accessible and stimulating. It didn't hurt that the text was crafted

around the children's story, 'The Velveteen Rabbit', one of the stories from my childhood that I loved dearly. I recall both the book and the film, and being moved to tears each time, both with the rabbit's becoming real, and the realisation that this reality came with a heavy cost. 'The Velveteen Rabbit' is a short children's story written in 1922 by Margery Williams. Simple in plot and idea, it nonetheless contains wisdom beyond its seeming simplicity. The issues brought up are those that concern children and adults in many ways, and Toni Raiten-D'Antonio taps into the key issue - living a life that is real, not fake or phony. Some authors in the area of vocational discernment and personal fulfillment talk about living an authentic life; this is another term for what is here meant to as being real. What does being real mean? For the Velveteen Rabbit, being real was a goal to strive for, not in a material sense (the rabbit did exist), but in a spiritual and emotional sense. The rabbit was one of many toys in the boy's room, many of which were flashier, more complex, brighter, shinier, or just 'more' in some way than the seemingly cheaply constructed Velveteen Rabbit. Yet the wise old horse, the Skin Horse, loved so much that his fur had rubbed off, inspired the rabbit by his acceptance, sense of self, and grace he extended, even sometimes to other toys that did not seem to deserve it. One of the key concepts in the story that Raiten-D'Antonio highlights is that 'real' isn't a product, but rather a process. 'It doesn't happen all at once,' the Skin Horse tells the rabbit. It is a process that can be slow, it can be painful, and it can lead where one doesn't expect. But the first concept is that being real is possible - Raiten-D'Antonio states that from the moment the rabbit realised that 'real' was a possibility, the rabbit was on the road to becoming real. For us as human beings, becoming real is not something we're likely to find in a self-help video or encounter workshop, going in as one thing and coming out as another. There is no 'eight-minute abs' variant for becoming real. Nor is being real always pretty. Again, according to the Skin Horse, 'It doesn't happen to people who break easily, or have sharp edges or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby.' However, these are things that matter only to those who don't understand (which, unfortunately, is much of our society). Raiten-D'Antonio coins the term 'United States of Generica' (U.S. of G., for short) for the kind of plastic, flashy society that runs on media-hyped images of what good and desirable should be. Raiten-D'Antonio is a therapist, having left the more glitzy world of television behind - once a mover on the corporate ladder (even if the intention was to produce PBS/educational 'worthwhile' television), she found herself in a place personally and vocationally that was inauthentic, and worried that by the time she would be permitted to do what she wanted to do, she might not be herself any longer. The culture in which we live has misplaced values (she highlights the fact that we pay more attention to models than to

Nobel Prize winners; even the term 'model' has implications beyond what in fact they are), and it is a struggle, a process, to become real - real to oneself and real to what is truly important in life. One of the tasks toward becoming real, according to Raiten-D'Antonio, is to learn empathy, and in particular self-empathy. The Skin Horse had great powers of empathy. The rabbit grew in this during the course of the story. Empathy and self-empathy an important principle, as are all twelve principles gleaned from the story. Being real is meaningful, as Raiten-D'Antonio describes in her epilogue, and leaves a legacy more lasting and real than stocks, bonds, real estate, etc. 'If you become more Real in your own life and bring that to your relationships, you are practically guaranteed to leave behind an inspiring example for others.' The transformation of the rabbit from toy to real is dramatic and poignant, and has lessons that can help transform our lives, too. This is a remarkable book, one that will stay with me for a long time to come, long after the whiskers have faded, the tail has become unsewn, and the fur has been loved off.

The ideas in this book have changed me. Reading Ms. Raiten-D'Antonio's simple, easy-to-understand, poetic words has helped me to clarify my values and nudged me along my way to building a true and real life. If you have ever been confused, unsure, or lost; or if you have ever lacked the confidence or courage to do what is in your heart, read this book.

When "The Velveteen Rabbit" was first published, it became an instant and enduringly popular children's classic primer on how to face and accept self even a tattered self in comparison with others. Toni Raiten-D'Antonio's *The Velveteen Principles: A Guide to Becoming Real* Hidden Wisdom from a Children's Classic goes a step further, using the story as a foundation for a self-help primer discussing superficial and inner beauty differences, and how to become more involved in a life well lived. Individual chapters insightfully discuss everything from real courage to developing emotional sensitivity and finding meaning in life.

My name is Elizabeth Claydon and I am writing this review under my father's name, because I do not have an account myself. I would like to respond to the "Really trite" comment posted about this amazing book. I was actually responsible for bringing Toni Raiten-D'Antonio down to Vanderbilt University to give a seminar lecture about being "Real" to tie in with the Image organization's focus on body image. I had read the *Velveteen Principles* two years before and was so inspired by its message that I wrote my own comments in the margin and shared the book with my mother. I have struggled with an eating disorder for 5 years and this book enabled me to finally communicate some

of my fears and issues with my mother that I had not been able to do in any other way. My mother was truly moved by the book as well and added her own comments, returning the book to me on my birthday the following spring. We have now performed this same ritual for Toni's second book and I find the tradition truly meaningful. I took a chance when I asked Toni to speak at my university; I thought she would be too busy like many authors. But true to the character of her book, she visited and gave an inspiring lecture full of hope and meaning. I wish the lady who posted the aforementioned response had attended the lecture; perhaps she might have understood Toni's message better. However, I think that the book speaks for itself. I do not consider it trite or repetitive. It takes the most poignant pieces from a wonderful children's classic and elaborates them, showing how these messages are applicable to all ages. This book allows young and old connect to a story that most people consider only a children's book. Madeleine L'Engle said: "If the book is too difficult for grownups, then you write it for children." Toni Raiten-D'Antonio's book allowed grownups to revisit an amazing children's story and re-discover the meaning behind it. Unlike many self-help authors, Toni also lives by her Principles. I have never met a more sincere, down-to-earth woman who was so confident in herself. She is truly an inspiration and her book is a worthwhile addition to any household.

This is an excellent resource for people desirous of personal transformation. The writer makes a powerful and thought provoking case for becoming "real". As you read this book, you will discover the areas in your life where self-objectifying has been the order of the day as well as the areas in which you have suppressed the true desires and dreams that are meant to be fulfilling in life and bring true happiness, peace and contentment. The book is not full of technical terms but packs a powerful punch as it awakens situational awareness and highlights poor mental-models that have blocked the progression of becoming real.

This book really lives up to its catchy name. Toni's unique approach to finding one's self through the use of The Velveteen Rabbit is creative and quite helpful. This book left me with a positive lasting impression.

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