



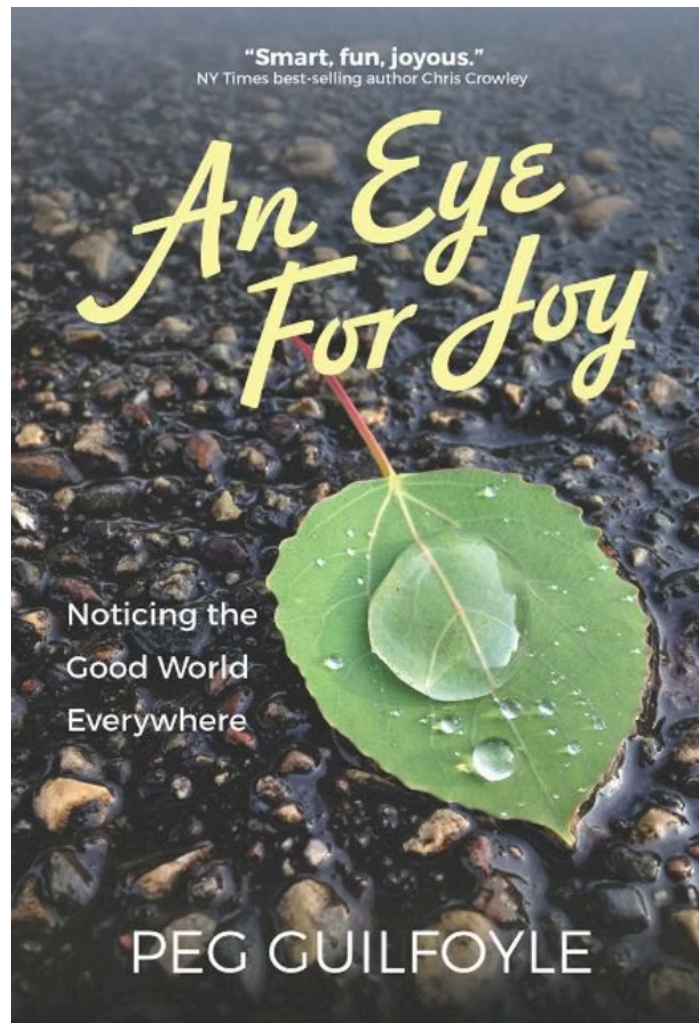
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# Author Q&A: An Eye for Joy: Embracing Everyday Joy Through Short Essays with Peg Guilfoyle



Peg Guilfoyle

In *An Eye for Joy: Noticing the Good World Everywhere*, author Peg Guilfoyle invites readers to slow down, pay attention, and find delight in life's smallest moments. Through short, sparkling true stories, the book celebrates wonder, curiosity, and the everyday joys we often overlook. We sat down with Peg to talk about the inspiration behind the book, the practice of noticing, and why joy is something we can cultivate every day, no matter life's challenges.



An Eye For Joy

## ABOUT THE BOOK

Q: What inspired you to write this collection of essays?

A: The world rushes by, and so does life. The writer Willa Cather called it “the shining elusive element – life hurrying past us and running away, too strong to stop, too sweet to lose...” I wanted to slow life down, and pull the remarkable out of the quotidian. I wanted to remind people that the world, despite its difficulties, is full of beauty. Seeing and savoring this goodness is a necessary balance.

Q: Your book celebrates the art of noticing. Why is that so important right now?

A: The world besieges us, every day, with sensation in an overwhelming flood. It’s a conscious act to notice its details, its beauties, and its humor. It is an affirmative way to move through the world. A kindly way, and a

compassionate way. And it casts each day in gratitude. The rewards of noticing are immense. And it's self-sowing. When you get in the habit of noticing, beautiful moments jump out at you. And it's fun.

Q: How did you decide which stories or moments to include?

A: I've tried to choose the most resonant, the most lively, the most true. And sometimes, the funniest.

Q: An advance reviewer described attention as a "life-saving spiritual practice." What did they mean by that?

A: The good world is not always pretty, but it's beautiful and big, bracing and bright. Paying attention calms the mind, puts the world into perspective, and reminds us that it is up to each of us to notice its goodness.

Q: Your tone has been compared to Anne Fadiman and Erma Bombeck. Who are your literary influences?

A: The world is full of beautiful writing. In fiction, Marilynne Robinson, Gwendolyn Brooks. In humor, Dave Barry. In poetry, Mary Oliver. In writing advice, Anne Lamott. But the master essayist, for me, is E.B. White, who said "All that I hope to say in books, all that I ever hope to say, is that I love the world." I feel the same way. I'm an omnivore.

## ON WRITING ABOUT EVERYDAY JOY

Q: What's your writing process like—especially for capturing everyday wonder?

A: I carry a notebook for scribbled notes-on-the-fly, sometimes just a word or two, and transfer them to a master file... sprawling, messy, impressionistic. I stay alert, but also allow my mind a dreamy resting state. I make writing appointments with myself in my calendar.

Q: These essays are short yet vivid. How do you craft concise, emotionally rich prose?

A: I tend to wait at the keyboard for the first sentence to appear. Each piece seems to find its own proper length. The last sentence often writes itself. Then I revise; I believe in that old saw that the best writing is re-writing.

Q: Was there one story that was especially hard—or joyful—to write?

A: The most joyful for me are ones that lead me to wonderful conversations. The book is populated by people who tell me things, and remind me that everyone has a backstory and a life full of incident.

A girl who hopes for a better job, some children raising family money at their lemonade stand, a fellow who honors the legacy of a grandfather he never met. We are all nourished by human connections; when someone tells me their story, I am required to pass it on! Positive human interactions knit the world together.

Q: How do you balance wit, reflection, and heart in your storytelling?

A: These stories contain wit, reflection, and heart because life contains wit, reflection, and heart. When we open our eyes, there they are!

## ON JOY, WONDER & DAILY LIFE

Q: Why did you choose to center joy in this book, especially in today's world?

A: The world can be difficult. Seeking and loving its moments of wonder, beauty, and humanity is a way to live in it, and to bend it toward the positive. And that journey brings you into contact and resonance with so many other humans of similar inclination. We are not alone.

Q: Is there an essay that still surprises or delights you every time you revisit it?

A: In "Meeting Sister Ebo", I had the pleasure and good fortune of spending a bit of close time with a person who was both saintly and funny. Writing about it settled it deep in my memory. I hope this piece opens that door for the reader.

Q: How do you personally cultivate joy and attention in your own life?

A: Staying open to the odd and interesting. Being willing to seek and research and find out the backstory. Talking with strangers. Being curious.

Q: Has your perspective on noticing changed since finishing the book?

A: It has become a habit! Everything is worth noticing, there to be harvested. And the impulse is self-sowing. The more you look, the more you see.

Q: What advice would you give to readers struggling to "see the good world"?

A: Find people who are joyous by nature or habit, and spend time with them. When you see something, anything at all, that piques your interest, look harder. Look for backstory. Revisit earlier-in-life passions. Try a new focus; follow sparks. Become a trusted friend of a small child, and listen to them seeing the world through their brand-new eyes.

## READING & WHAT'S NEXT

Q: What do you hope readers take away from this book?

A: The capacity to see the small in a large world, and to take pleasure from it.

Q: Have any reader reactions surprised or moved you?

A: “Your work is so life-affirming!” “These short essays make my day!” “Little bursts of happiness!” “This is like a conversation with a friend.” “A bright moment to start my day!”

Q: Are you working on something new? Will it explore similar themes?

A: More joy, more beauty, more wondering! The world is a huge buffet, and it is full of people worth listening to. Are you familiar with the story of the two wolves, attributed to the Cherokee? I intend to feed the good wolf.

Q: If this book had a soundtrack or piece of art as a companion, what would it be? A: I suppose it would be collage. My curiosity, and that of my readers, is unbounded... can include everything!

Q: What books do you turn to when you need to rediscover joy or wonder?

A: *Winter's Tale*, by Mark Helprin. The plays of Shakespeare, especially *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. *One Long River of Song*, by Brian Doyle. *Folk Song USA*, John A. and Alan Lomax. *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*.

Life is full of little surprises, and *Ay Eye for Joy* is your invitation to notice them. With each sparkling essay, you'll find yourself laughing, marveling, and remembering how much delight is all around. Treat yourself, or someone you love, to a book that celebrates the everyday. Pick up your copy today and start noticing the joy.



## An Eye For Joy: Noticing The Good World Everywhere

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