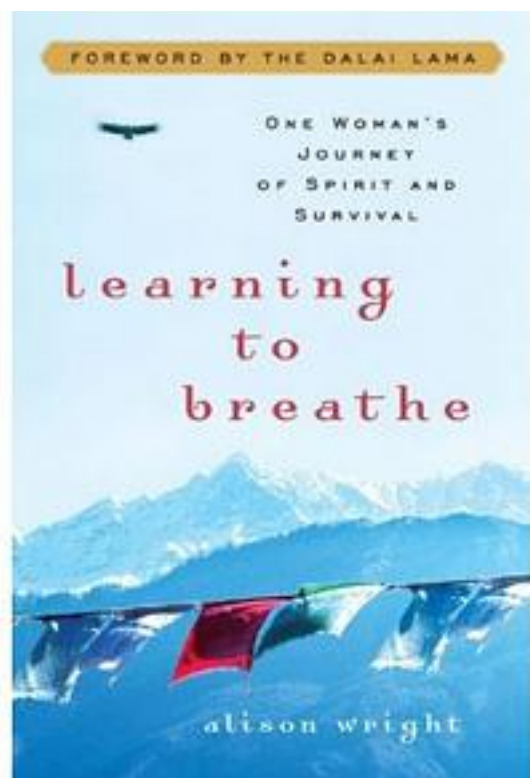


Learning to Breathe



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At age sixteen, Andy Cave followed in his father's and his grandfather's footsteps and became a miner — one of the last recruits into a dying world.

Every day he would descend 3,500 feet into the Grimethorpe pit. But at weekends, Andy inhabited a very different world — thousands of feet above the pitheads of the colliery. Introduced to his local mountaineering club while a miner, he soon learned to cherish this newfound freedom. Living through the coalminer's strikes of the

mid-eighties — the guilt, the broken friendships, the poverty — Andy continued to indulge his passion, and in 1986, after much soul-searching, he quit the mines in order to take up mountaineering professionally. At the same time he decided to educate himself, acquiring, almost from a standing start, academic qualifications including a PhD. in sociology.

This extraordinary twin odyssey is graphically recalled in this remarkable book. Andy also recounts the grim tale of one of the steepest and most difficult summits in the world — the north face of Changabang in the Himalaya. Seventeen days later, he and two of his teammates — his best friend had already perished — crawled into base camp, frostbitten and emaciated. His account of this terrifying experience provides a dramatic climax to this extraordinary story.

Learning to Breathe is first and foremost a lively and humorous memoir, written with energy and insight, about two very different groups of men, each navigating equally inhospitable worlds. Finally, on a larger scale, it is an examination of our ability to draw on inner strengths and the strengths of others.

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目录:

[Learning to Breathe_ 下载链接1](#)

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