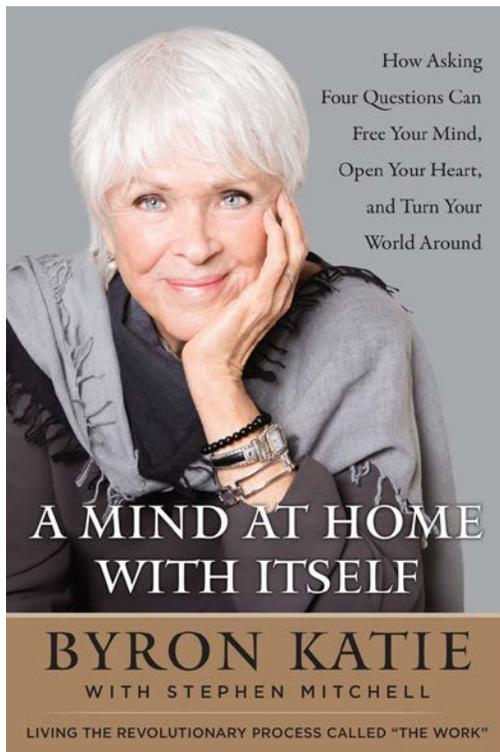


Author Katie Byron's The Work shares 4 questions to help people navigate path to peace

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For the Deseret News

Published: September 22, 2017 8:00 pm



In many ways, this is a story about Laura Warburton, a woman who experienced the incomprehensible. Her 16-year-old daughter Hannah committed suicide. And Warburton was the one who found her daughter.

“I turned around and saw her in the closet. Her face was gray,” Laura Warburton said. “All I could think was: ‘No. We are not done yet Hannah. You can’t go yet, Hannah.’ I was pleading with her while I was talking to 911.”

The devastating thoughts that filled the mother’s mind were relentless in their grip: “What if I had been home earlier? Perhaps I could have prevented Hannah’s death. No. We are not done!”

Reality proved otherwise. Hannah was buried under a shady cedar tree in Huntsville, Weber County. Soon after that, Warburton, a devout member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, says a book was divinely put in her hands that helped her with her lingering questions.

So in some ways, this story is also about the work of the author of that book, an American speaker and best-selling author by the name of Byron Katie. (Her full name is Byron Katie Mitchell; everyone calls her Katie.) Katie is the founder of a self-inquiry process that consists of four questions and that people around the world refer to as [The Work](#). She shows people — often in prisons and hospitals and churches — how to use The Work to question the stressful thoughts in their minds. [Oprah Winfrey interviewed Katie](#) on her television show and [Time magazine](#) dubbed Katie “a spiritual innovator for the new millennium.”

On Sept. 23, Katie will be at the Grand America Hotel in Salt Lake City to do The Work with people and to talk about her new book, [“A Mind at Home with Itself”](#) ([HarperOne](#)) (see thework.com/en/events for information). Warburton, who now uses The Work in her nonprofit, [Live Hannah’s Hope](#), will also be at the event. Warburton, 55, says she is sharing her personal journey because she wants as many people as possible to know that there is hope, even in the midst of the seemingly unfathomable.

“If they are struggling with suffering and tormenting thoughts, there is a peaceful way through,” Warburton said.

The Work

From the very beginning of her journey that began with Hannah's death three years ago, Warburton found tremendous comfort in the way her Mormon congregation, family and friends prayed for her, reached out to her and loved her.

“I knew God would help me get to the place where I could breathe,” she said. “Because I could barely breathe. I knew he would heal me.”

One day, a friend arrived at Warburton's Huntsville house with an audio book version of Katie's “Loving What Is.” As Warburton listened to the recording of Katie facilitating people through The Work at one of the author's live events, Warburton noticed how deeply everyone believed the stories about their lives, how Katie asked them simple questions, and how relief flooded through the participants as they answered those questions.

“I listened to that audio book over and over — and over again,” Warburton said.

The most excruciating thought that The Work helped her question was the idea that if only she had come home earlier, she could have saved her daughter's life.

Four questions

“Is it true?” is the first of the four questions in The Work.

It seemed true, Warburton thought.

The second question is “can you absolutely know that it's true?”

Warburton closed her eyes and asked herself if she could absolutely know if it was true that she could have saved Hannah's life. Suddenly, all kinds of other possibilities presented themselves. Perhaps, for instance, if she had arrived home earlier that afternoon and somehow stopped Hannah's suicide, Hannah may have killed herself at another time. Maybe even later that same day.

"Then I realized that Hannah left us because she believed her painful thoughts so much that she wanted to end her own life," Warburton said.

The third question is "how do you react when you believe that thought?"

"I felt overwhelming guilt and overwhelming shame," Warburton said. "I hated myself for not somehow knowing that I should have come home sooner. I was at war with myself."

In her answer to the third question, she discovered the cause and effect of believing an untrue thought.

Then Warburton looked at what it would be like if she didn't believe her own stressful thoughts. This is the fourth question of The Work.

Katie calls this state of mind — a place where thoughts are questioned instead of automatically believed — a clear and open mind.

"Because here, I no longer believe the thought that was causing me to suffer," Katie said in a phone interview. "I am no longer arguing with reality. I have learned that whenever I argue with reality."

There, in that empty space where the arguments inside her stopped, Warburton finally felt peace.

“I realized that the reality was that I didn’t come home earlier than I did,” she said. “And so when I dropped the thought that I should have, that self-torture ended.”

Finding peace

When Warburton answered the fourth question of The Work, she realized that she thought she would be at peace.

She wouldn’t be arguing with reality. She would be a mother who was free to grieve her daughter’s death. As she accepted her own grief, she discovered that she was more able to accept those around her in their grief, too. Her relationship with her husband, Bruce, and her sons, Chay and Chase, grew deeper.

“I was able to accept them where they were at and not try to change them in order to make me feel more secure,” Warburton said.

“I realized that the shame of suicide was really up to me and my thinking,” Warburton said. “It had nothing to do with anyone else. I had done all I could and I had always done all I could.”

Without the intense burden of regret, Warburton noticed that she became more available to help others.

Warburton founded Live Hannah’s Hope, her nonprofit, and in the past three years has worked with hundreds of Utah residents in suicide prevention and support of the aftermath of suicide. She has also

helped get the Legislature to pass bills on suicide prevention and awareness.

Each time she questioned a painful belief, Warburton said, she gained the courage and inspiration to continue with the investigation of another thought.

“I realized that I was the author of my own pain and I was the author of my own peace,” Warburton said.

'Answers that meet the questions'

While Katie has become increasingly well-known since she began sharing The Work in 1986, she is careful to point out that the power of The Work does not have anything to do with her. In fact, she said in an interview that the power doesn't rest in the questions.

“The power of The Work is in the answers that meet the questions,” Katie said.

After more than a decade-long depression, Katie said she “woke up” with The Work one morning. That was when she realized that when she believed the stressful thoughts she suffered and that when she questioned them, she didn't suffer.

Instead of trying to change the world to match her thoughts about what she thought it should be like, she recognized that she could question those thoughts, meet reality as it presented itself and experience freedom. That was when the suffering stopped. She woke up that morning to a joy that has never left her for even a moment.

Today, Katie shares The Work with millions of people who end up integrating the questions into their daily lives.

Kathryn Dixon watched Katie facilitating people in The Work some 20 years ago at a yoga center in Holladay. Dixon said she was so “blown away” that she began doing The Work in earnest. In 2003, Dixon founded the [Clarity Coaching Institute](#), a business that uses The Work to help people question their painful beliefs.

Once a week, Dixon, who is booked three weeks to a month in advance with clients, holds an evening meeting at her home in Sugar House for people to do The Work on a donation-only basis. People share their painful stories about everything from their partners and their bodies to their work lives and their dogs.

When a reporter visited the group, she saw that while Warburton’s story may be extreme in its intensity, the essence of transformation that her story captures is not rare.

“The power of Laura’s inquiry is available to everyone,” Katie said, “not just to a chosen few.”



Katie Byron, Author of The Work

Lori Yearwood is a freelance reporter who writes regularly for newspapers and magazines. A journalist who was nominated by The Miami Herald for a Pulitzer Prize in feature writing, she specializes in profiles about how God moves through people.
