

Unfinished Business: One Man's Extraordinary Year of Trying to Do the Right Things

by Lee Kravitz



About the Book

After losing his job, Lee Kravitz, a workaholic in his midfifties, took stock of his life and realized just how disconnected he had become from the people who mattered most to him. He committed an entire year to reconnecting with them and making amends.

Kravitz takes readers on ten transformational journeys, among them repaying a 33-year-old debt, making a long-overdue condolence call, finding an abandoned relative, and fulfilling a forgotten promise. Along the way, we meet a cast of wonderful characters and travel the globe --- to a refugee camp in Kenya, a monastery in California, the desert of southern Iran, a Little League game in upstate New York, and a bar in Kravitz's native Cleveland. In each instance, the act of reaching out opens new paths for both personal and spiritual growth.

All of us have unfinished business --- the things we should have done but just let slip. Kravitz's story reveals that the things we've avoided are exactly those that have the power to transform, enrich, enlarge, and even complete us. The lesson of the book is one applicable to us all: Be mindful of what is most important, and act on it. The rewards will be immediate and lasting.

Discussion Guide

1. Why does the author embark on his year-long project? What does he hope to accomplish by tying up his life's loose ends?
2. The author lists several reasons why he lets important matters slide: not enough time or energy, his tendency to procrastinate, his fear of doing the wrong thing. What are some of the reasons that you accumulate unfinished business?

3. The author writes that his family is the source of his "most intimate and anxiety-producing" unfinished business. Do you think that's true for most people? Is it true for you?
4. The author goes on ten journeys to close circles and make amends. Which of his journeys -- for example, paying back a debt, finding a long-lost relative, thanking an old teacher -- resonates most with you? Why?
5. If you had one year to tie up your loose emotional ends, how would you spend it? What items would be at the top of your list of unfinished business?
6. Shahid believes that it's important to address your unfinished business because "we need to make an accounting of these things before we die, so that our souls can rest." Akmal says, "It's not about resting in peace. It's about moving forward. It's about optimizing your human potential." Who in your opinion is right?
7. Think of all the people you cared about who have passed away. Did any of them die without knowing what they had meant to you? If you had one more conversation with each of those people, what would you say?
8. The author says that he wants to live "a more connected life?" What does he mean by that phrase? Rate your own life. On a scale of 1 to 10, how rich is it in terms of human connectedness?
9. Mr. Jarvis challenges his students by saying: "After you die, what would you like people to say about you? Your answer to that question should guide the way you live." What would you like people to say about you after you die?
10. Has this book given you a perspective on your life that you find useful? What ideas are you likely to take away or apply from it? Can you think of any steps you can take in your own life to keep yourself from accumulating unfinished business?

Author Bio

Lee Kravitz was editor in chief of *Parade* magazine from 2000 to 2007. Before that, he was the founding editor of *React*, a magazine for teens, and served as an editorial director of Scholastic Inc. He is currently the board president of Youth Communication, and active on the boards of the Public Education Network, The League, and Youth Service America. A graduate of Yale College and Columbia Journalism School, he lives in New York City and Clinton Corners, New York, with his wife and three children.

Critical Praise

"**Unfinished Business** is not just the story of how and why and when Lee Kravitz decided to tie up his loose ends, although all that is here. It's also about the extraordinary and unexpected events that unfold in his life and others' once he states the intention to pursue completion and becomes determined to see it through. This is an uplifting and truly life-affirming book."

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Publication Date: May 11, 2010

Genres: Nonfiction

Hardcover: 224 pages

Publisher: Bloomsbury USA

ISBN-10: 1596916753

ISBN-13: 9781596916753