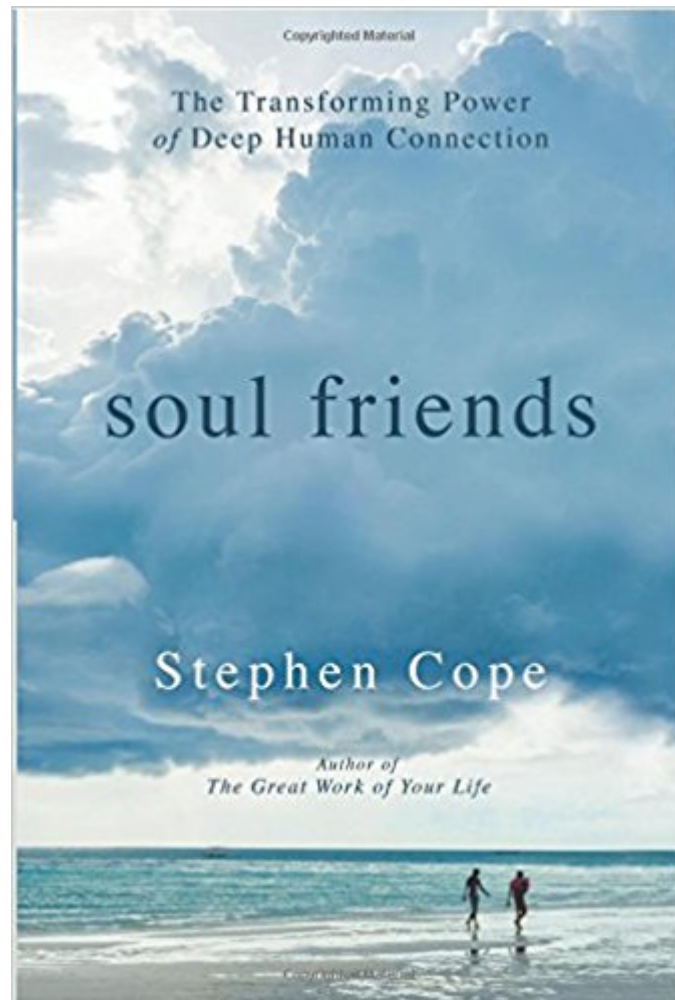




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# **Soul Friends: The Transforming Power Of Deep Human Connection**



## Synopsis

“Most of us will have many friends throughout our lifetimes—friends of all shapes, sizes, and callings. Many of these are wonderful, meaningful friendships. Some are difficult. But some magic few of these are connections that have gone right to our soul. These five or seven or ten friendships have been powerful keys to determining who we have become and who we will become. . . . These are the people I call Soul Friends.”

As the Senior Scholar-in-Residence for over 25 years at the renowned Kripalu Center, Stephen Cope has spent decades investigating—and writing about—the integration of body, mind, and spirit and the rich complexity of our relationships with others, and with ourselves. Perhaps the central truth that arises from his work is this: human beings are universally wired for one thing—vital connection with one another. *Soul Friends* invites us on a compelling journey into the connectivity of the human psyche, the study of which has fascinated scholars, philosophers, and thinkers for centuries. Cope seamlessly blends science, scholarship, and storytelling, drawing on his own life as well as the histories of famous figures—from Eleanor Roosevelt to Charles Darwin to Queen Victoria—whose formative relationships shed light on the nature of friendship itself. In his exploration, he distills human connection into six distinct yet interconnected mechanisms: containment, twinship, adversity, mirroring, identification, and conscious partnership. Then he invites us to reflect on how these forms of connection appear in our own lives, helping us work toward a fuller understanding of “who we have become and who we will become.”

Without a doubt, the journey to our most fulfilled selves requires us to look within. But in order to truly thrive, we must make the most of who we are in relation to one another as well. Unsparingly honest, deeply wise, and irresistibly readable, *Soul Friends* gives us a map to find our way.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Soul Friends” grabbed me from the very first sentence. I couldn’t put it down. I wanted to devour it in one sitting. Not only is it beautifully written in a way that nourishes the soul, it is also historically fascinating. You don’t want to miss this one.

—Christiane Northrup, M.D., *New York Times* best-selling author of *Goddesses Never Age* and *Making Life Easy*

“Stephen Cope’s *Soul Friends* is destined to be a classic. It is a beautiful and moving examination of the rich possibilities of deep friendship that are right under our noses—possibilities which we all too seldom see or mine fully. Cope makes us want to risk making real, intentional human connections—and makes us long to celebrate them, and to allow them to transform us into fully-conscious and fully-alive human beings.

—Geneen Roth, *New York Times* best-selling author of *Women, Food and God* and *Lost and Found*

“Lovingly crafted, deep, richly engaging, and wise, *Soul Friends* is a beautiful work. It will inspire your friendships, expand your understanding, and uplift your heart.

—Jack Kornfield, author of *A Path with Heart*

“For centuries, writers interested in the soul have reflected on friendship as the foundation of all love. Stephen Cope’s contribution is penetrating, subtle, and beautiful. He tells his own extended stories and those of remarkable people who have found meaning in friendship. He sorts out what it means to be a friend and presents his rich imagination of it in the fluent language of a novelist. A very special book.

—Thomas Moore, *New York Times* best-selling author of *Care of the Soul*

“With *Soul Friends*, Stephen Cope offers a fresh and powerful way to deepen our connection to those who support us in being who we truly are. He skillfully guides us to better understand and enjoy the rich tapestry of our lives. *Soul Friends* is sure to remain an important resource for people for many years to come.

—Sharon Salzberg, *New York Times* best-selling author of *Lovingkindness* and *Real Happiness*

“I’ve been waiting for this book! There are a plethora of books—from memoirs to self-help—for people navigating the mysterious minefield of romantic relationship, but few that offer insight into friendship. And for me, the friends I have from childhood on have colored my life with just as much brightness and darkness as lovers and husbands. With honesty, humor, and wisdom, Stephen Cope uses his own

friendships, and the Æsoul friendships Æ between people known and unknown, to explore the sometimes difficult and always powerful landscape of love between friends. Reading the book has reawakened memories of my own soul friendships across a lifetime, and has enriched the friendships that fill my life today. Thank you, Stephen.

• Elizabeth Lesser, co-founder, Omega Institute; author of Æ Marrow Æ and the Æ New York Times Æ bestseller Æ Broken Open Æ

“Soul Friends Æ is written for those who want to deepen their journey into authentic, conscious loving. In this brilliant and utterly engaging book, Stephen Cope invites us into a fascinating and life-changing inquiry: What is the nature and potential of our friendships? Please give yourself wholeheartedly to this inquiry. With Stephen Æ’s expert and inspired guidance, your capacity to be intimate and fully alive in relationships will flourish!

• Tara Brach, author of Æ Radical Acceptance Æ and Æ True Refuge Æ

“This is a glorious book about human connections, and it Æ’s one that should be read by anyone interested in the human mind and soul. Stephen Cope Æ’s beautiful language and ideas guide us into the infinite mystery of human attunement. Using his own life story, that of some of his favorite writers, and knowledge gained from depth psychology, Cope shows us how people who truly see us and meet us on our deepest level shape who we fundamentally become. Æ Soul Friends Æ gives voice to the very foundation of human existence, and shows us how attuned relationships shape and expand our individual selves to help us become infinitely larger.

• Bessel VanderKolk, Æ New York Times Æ best-selling author of Æ The Body Keeps the Score Æ

“Soul Friends Æ is a marvelous book beautifully written and filled with hard-earned wisdom and profound grounded inspiration. Nothing is more important in our frightening time than cultivating our deepest relationships, so that we can be supported and sustained in the grueling work ahead to preserve and restore our world.

• Andrew Harvey, award-winning author of Æ The Hope: A Guide to Sacred Activism Æ and Æ Return to Joy Æ

“We are profoundly shaped by our most intense relationships. This is a central tenet of depth psychology. Through his beautiful prose and engrossing examples, Stephen Cope brings this insight to life better than anything else I have read on this crucial topic. The examples from his own life and those of people like Charles Darwin and Sigmund Freud are fascinating and illuminating. You will learn a great deal about the psychodynamics of friendships, but more importantly you Æ’ll learn how you got to be the way you are.

• Richard C. Schwartz, Ph.D., founder of the Center for Self Leadership, creator of Internal Family Systems therapy, and author of Æ You Are the One You Æ’ve Been Waiting For Æ

“With a storyteller Æ’s warmth and a

sage's wisdom, Stephen Cope illuminates the self-affirming, challenging, life-changing friendships that make us who we are. What a gift from his soul to ours.

James S. Gordon, M.D., author of *Unstuck: Your Guide to the Seven-Stage Journey out of Depression* and Founder and Executive Director of The Center for Mind-Body Medicine

"Stephen Cope has done it again. He's written a book that makes you catch your breath, that can't help but crack what is closed in you. The deep investigation in *Soul Friends* is not only Cope's journey into authenticity through human connection, it is also ours. Expect to be challenged and changed by this book. Expect to wake up. I will be giving this book to every person who is important in my life, so that they can be on the journey of ultimate self-discovery with me. This is not just a book, but an experience, one that will change your life. I recommend it to every student and colleague. I recommend it to you."

Amy Weintraub, author of *Yoga for Depression* and *Yoga Skills for Therapists* and founder of the LifeForce Yoga Healing Institute

"Stephen Cope's visionary new book *Soul Friends* is a tour de force on human relationships. In his trademark brilliant and accessible style, Cope empowers us to follow the trajectory of our own friendships, to see afresh how these connections have fundamentally shaped us and made us who we are. I found myself seeing every significant relationship I have had through a deeper, more complex, and more refined lens. Especially revelatory was Stephen's writing on difficult friendships, how important they are in our development and how to make meaning from this adversity. So generous and so transparent is the author's own story of the joys and sorrows of authentic human connection that he emboldens me to see my own story in more honest and penetrating ways. When I finished *Soul Friends* I felt vibrantly alive, more awake and compassionate towards the human condition."

Gail Straub, best-selling author of *Returning to My Mother's House* and co-founder of The Empowerment Institute

"*Soul Friends* is a tour de force of wisdom, humor, and psychological insight. By delicately dissecting friendships—personal and historical—Cope makes the subtle clear, and the invisible visible, illuminating the roles of friendships around us, and he does this so eloquently that we wish him to be our own wisest friend. Here is the psychology teacher you wish you'd had, and the literature guide you longed for, and the life coach who asks you the best questions—questions that will first make you lean back, and then leap forward."

Diane Cameron, award-winning columnist, writer, and speaker; author of *Never Leave Your Dead* and *Out of the Woods*

"Stephen Cope's tender, literate voice touches our profound yearning and helps us unlock our heart's

desire: to feel and provide nourishing human connection, to come home and come to life. A gem.

— Joseph Bobrow Roshi, Ph.D., Zen master, psychoanalyst, and author of *Zen and Psychotherapy, Partners in Liberation*; *Waking Up from War: A Better Way Home for Veterans and Nations*; and *After Midnight: Poems of Love and Death*

“Eight billion of us are hurtling through space circumnavigating the sun at 1000 mph, at times feeling so alone and at times feeling desperately crowded and impinged upon. We transmit signals through the dark, both hoping to find another and fearing what we may find. I am here. I hear you. I want to meet you. And, as we encounter another, in that meeting we complete ourselves—or not.

In *Soul Friends*, Stephen Cope urges us to explore the wonder of those we have loved and who have loved us in return, as well as those with whom we have collided, and who, through those collisions, have altered us in significant ways. This book will move you. It will make you go deep. You read it and discover your heart. You will laugh and cry. By revealing his own experience, Cope opens yours to those you have treasured and who have treasured you. In this exploration you will come to life more fully than you ever imagined.

— Alex N. Sabo, M.D., Distinguished Life Fellow, American Psychiatric Association; Past President, Massachusetts Psychiatric Society, co-editor and author with soul friend Les Havens of *The Real World Guide to Psychotherapy Practice*

“Stephen Cope’s elegant and masterful *Soul Friends* is nothing short of a profoundly revolutionary view of true friendship and human connection. The author weaves together his extensive background in psychology and contemplative studies, the latest developments in neuroscience, and deeply personal stories of transformational friendship in his own life and the lives of others. We leave this remarkable book with a deeper understanding of (and longing for) the all too rare lightning-bolt moments of awareness of the connection with another person as a turning point in life. If we are lucky, those moments signal the beginning of a relationship that leaves us in an entirely new orientation, standing on new ground. This book lets us understand why and how.

— Barbara Bonner, author of *Inspiring Generosity* and *Inspiring Courage*

“In *Soul Friends* Stephen Cope invites us to resonate with the warmth of his spirit as he guides us through a deeply personal journey about human connection. His integrative approach effortlessly weaves together wise scholarship with heartfelt experience. Going to the very heart of the relational nature of humankind, Cope reminds us that “In order to be fully alive, we must create around ourselves a vital surround of relationship.” This is a book with timely and bracing wisdom; it will be an inspiration and a guide for all seeking to enrich their lives.

— Anna L. Stothart, Psy.D., LMHC

“*Soul Friends* is a profoundly insightful, personal, and historical account of the

transformative potential of deep human connection. Stephen Cope's brilliantly written book exemplifies his depth of understanding of the human psyche and illuminates the immeasurable importance of secure relationships as catalysts for health and healing. All those seeking to enhance their understanding of the developmental significance of social bonds across the lifespan will treasure this book!

— B Grace Bullock, Ph.D., author of *A Mindful Relationships*

Stephen Cope is the Senior Scholar in Residence at Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. He is a Western-trained psychotherapist who writes and teaches about the relationship between Western psychological paradigms and the Eastern contemplative traditions, and the best-selling author of such books as *The Great Work of Your Life* and *Yoga and the Quest for the True Self*. Stephen holds degrees from Amherst College and Boston College. He completed graduate and postgraduate training in psychoanalytic psychotherapy in the Boston area, where he practiced for many years before joining the staff at Kripalu. In its 25th anniversary edition, *Yoga Journal* named him one of the most important innovators in the developing field of American yoga. He lives in Albany, New York, and Key West, Florida.

Stephen Cope is one of my favorite authors. I've read every one of his books over and over again. And his new book does not disappoint. In fact, I think it's his best yet. *Soul Friends* has opened my eyes to the enormous role that friendship (and relationships of all kinds) can play in living an optimal life. As always, it's Stephen's combination of story-telling (often hilarious) and scholarship that makes the book so readable. As another reviewer has said, he seems to find just the right balance between stories and exposition. It makes reading a real delight. And of course, I think most of us will identify with his stories in some way. Also, as in Stephen's last book, *The Great Work of Your Life*, he interweaves stories here of friendships between great historical characters (Freud, Darwin, Eleanor Roosevelt, Queen Victoria, Henry David Thoreau) and these stories just help to illuminate in fascinating ways the principles he is writing about. This book is one, like all his books, which I will read over and over again, always enjoying and learning something new. Thanks, Stephen, for your latest gift to your loyal readers!!

What an absorbing delight to read these pages and work with Cope's ideas! In the personal growth field, a lot is written about yourself alone (as if there could be a seeker alone) and a lot is written about romantic/soul love relationships. Few books examine friendship as such, and inquire into the various kinds of friendship. This book will make you think, as never before, about the number and

intensity of your friendships : same-sex and cross-gender friendships, connections between old and young, between the living and the dead, even friendships with people you haven't met in the flesh, like authors. Cope grounds his ever-readable, often passionate discussion in three ways: in attachment theory and object relations -- which, incredibly, he renders entertaining; in the friendships among famous exemplars, like that between Darwin and Fitzroy; and most absorbingly of all in his personal stories of friendship and love. The longest and best chapter, the one that will probably provoke the strongest response from you as it did from me and as it seems to from Cope himself, is the chapter on the Noble Adversary -- the kind of friendship in which you are free both to love and to hate, and through which both parties grow. This book will take you into delicious stories from history (like the special bond between Victoria and Albert) and insights from world literature (some choice extracts from Annie Dillard, Emily Dickinson, Rilke, etc), and most of all (if you do the exercises he puts at the end of each chapter) into a searching exploration of your own past: what is glorious, and what may be lacking or difficult, in the landscape of your own close human relations.

I have a group of friends who are all reading SOUL FRIENDS right now, and we're gonna start a book-study group for the next few months, centering on our friendships. This book is the perfect vehicle for that kind of group, I think. I'm giving it five stars, because I loved it, and honestly all of the people I've given it to have also loved it. I gave it to my best friend and she cried when I told her she was my soul friend. This book has a lot of heart in it.

I LOVE this book. It is amazing to me that it speaks to me right where I am. There are so many experiences I've had that were reframed by what I read. I am so grateful to have stumbled on this book, and I know that I will retread it.

This an intense and exciting book with many new (to me) concepts which bring together intuition with traditional psychotherapeutic concepts. This integration opened my mind and heart to the possibility of deeper awareness about who I am as a human being in a complicated Universe.

Why? nothing to add

When my friend first suggested this book, I was wary--thinking it might be another New Age softball. Wow, was I surprised. This is one of the most intelligent, penetrating, and subtle



examinations of friendship you can imagine. And this guy writes beautifully. So unusual to find this kind of prose and this kind of subtlety of language and thought these days. Cope interweaves personal stories with those of really fascinating historical figures, and achieves a wonderful balance of story, science, poetry, and history. Of course, I particularly love Darwin and Freud, and to hear how their lives had been profoundly changed through friendship was a complete revelation to me. I also really loved the suggested exercises at the ends of chapters, because I found myself actually DOING those (and I never do that) and finding them super useful and revealing. I think this book, and the inner work it has stimulated, will be reverberating with me for a long time. I'm giving it to all my friends. Ellen Kneut

I've been following Stephen Cope's writing career, and it's interesting to watch him become an expert in telling riveting stories about "great lives." In SOUL FRIENDS, he really brings to life the amazing best-friendships of some people I've been particularly interested in • Charles Darwin, Sigmund Freud, Eleanor Roosevelt, Queen Victoria, and Thoreau. For me, these stories really add richness to his own personal narratives. I've been reading him since he came out with his first book twenty years ago (Yoga and the Quest for the True Self) and it's so much fun to watch the development of a truly great writer. Can't wait for the next one!!

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