

Jeremy's Secrets to a Happy and Fulfilled Life

Philip Ledlin

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"Jeremy knew the key to authentically improving educational outcomes was found in developing teacher effectiveness. Teachers are the most important resources in schools: they need to be equipped with the best skills to achieve measurable goals."

Jeremy... you've got it in one! As an educator for four decades plus, I have always been of this mind. It makes no difference whether a school has every conceivable technical teaching aid at its disposal, if the teachers are inept then the students will have difficulty in achieving their individual potential.

In his book *Jeremy's Secrets* Philip Ledlin has given the reader an in-depth look into the daily machinations of a country school called 'Riant,' through the eyes of his main character Jeremy Cohen. Jeremy, a former primary school principal takes on two jobs at the local country school as a part-time-teacher for three days and the school maintenance man for one and a half days. In fact a nine-day fortnight. He sees the rural change as an opportunity to devote more time to his family of his wife Ruby and his offspring Marty, Siena and Lucy.

Ultimately his association and devotion to others in the school community creates a wave of purpose and fulfilment for all those with whom he meets. Jeremy makes a marvellous discovery when he encounters the country singer Kenny Rogers during a parent-teacher interview. His

discovers through Kenny three things which are necessary for health and well-being. Jeremy decides they encompass everything that would enable a person to live a happy, fulfilled life.

He deals with the emotional lives of 'Riant's' teachers, parents and students. I was perplexed by this unusual name for a school until its origin was revealed. It's antiquated dictionary meaning is given as 'laughing children.' That's what schools are all about. The happy laughter of children as they learn and play together in a non-threatening and safe environment.

Jeremy takes us on a journey of faith, hope and revelation. He makes the reader fall about laughing one moment and brushing away an escaped tear the next. The reader will become emotionally involved with the scenarios presented.

The book has a huge emphasis on the anti-bullying policies most schools have in place today and strategies of how to deal with problems as they emerge. A newly-trained teacher will find these treasures invaluable.

Jeremy calls his discovery "Kenny's Oracle." The Oracle has a powerful simple wisdom – In order to avoid depression, jealousy, loneliness, anger and/or desperation we need:

Something to do
Something to look forward to
Someone to love

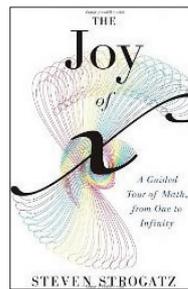
Throughout out the book Jeremy quotes sayings from Mother Teresa, Kateri Tekakwitha. Ariistotle, Einstein *et al.* The quote that hit home personally is:

"Hope has two beautiful daughters; their names are Anger and Courage. Anger that things are the way they are. Courage to make them the way they ought to be." – *St Augustine.*

The book also raises issues about School Leadership Development Programs, National Testing and League Tables, Anti-Bullying and a myriad of other current educational issues.

This a book which I would strongly recommend to parents, teachers and principals.

Barb Ady
Music and Drama Lead Teacher



The Joy of X

Steven Strogatz

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

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RR \$US15.84 Amazon.com

Steven Strogatz is Professor of Applied Mathematics at Cornell University in New York. He has published several textbooks and books, as well as a series of opinion pieces for the *New York Times*.

As a Year 10 student, all too often I find myself in maths class, wondering whether sine waves or the quadratic formula will ever appear in my life after school. Do these curved lines or formulae even have place in the world, outside a maths textbook? I usually pitch some curly questions at my maths teacher and enjoy watching her reaction (I got a very strange look when we were studying graphs of circular functions: "so does that mean tan graphs are like teachers, you don't ever touch their ASSymptote?"). For teachers like mine, Steven Strogatz's *The Joy of X* is their solace.

The book takes you back to the maths of early primary school: simple counting and addition and subtraction, before whizzing through negative numbers, algebra, Pythagoras' theorem, the idea of infinity, geometry and calculus. Strogatz explains these concepts in an illustrative, practical or simply clearly-worded way that will make you feel a little bit more love towards a subject that is often misunderstood.

He confronts some of the questions of today (how many partners should I date before settling down? How does Google sift through the web and find the best websites? How should I flip my mattress to get the best wear out of it?) with clarity, simplicity, high-level thinking and humour that should make any adult realise that maths is not an impractical subject, but indeed everywhere.

The benefits of reading *The Joy of X* as a teacher are many. Whether you read it with your students in mind or as a self-indulgent pleasure, the award-winning professor explains concepts in a way that makes them feel shiny and new.

He writes with energy and excitement that is infectious; he makes you connect ideas, think on a small- and large scale, discover new facts in areas you thought you had conquered, say "ah-ha!"

And he makes you want to share your newfound knowledge with others. The bite-sized chapters make it easy to dip in and out of or read in one irresistible chunk.

Hannah Kuhar
Year 10, Melbourne

The Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards 2013

The Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards are the oldest and largest poetry competition for school aged children in Australia.

The competition dates for 2013 are from the 1st March to 30th June and the Awards' optional theme for 2013 is "Wherever the Wind Blows".

In 2012 there were more than 10,000 entries and around 700 schools participated in the Awards.

My Country, has featured highly for over one hundred years in anyone's list of most known and most loved Australian poems. The first draft of what was to become Australia's most quoted and best loved poem was written at age 19 in England at a time when Dorothea Mackellar was feeling homesick. Published in the *London Spectator* under the title *Core of My Heart*, Dorothea was never quite content with the verses.

She wrote, and re-wrote the poem several times after returning to Australia while living in the apartments above her father's consulting rooms in Buckland Chambers, Liverpool Street, Sydney, opposite the ANZAC Memorial. **ET**