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Make sure you meet Syd Arthur. She may be your neighbor. She may even be you.

“Long before the term Ju-Bu (Jewish-Buddhist) or Bu-Ju (Buddhist-Jew) was invented, my spiritual inclinations led me to seek balance with one foot in the synagogue and the other crossed over into a seated lotus position.” So says Ellen Frankel, author of the new novel, *Syd Arthur*.

“Perhaps this is just my karma,” Frankel speculates. “Maybe in a past life I was a Buddhist nun with a fondness for a sesame bagel with a shmear of cream cheese. My Jewish roots have grounded me in the soil of my ancestors, while my branches have stretched to the mystical Shangri La where I longed to find my own Bodhi Tree and, like the Buddha, reach enlightenment.”

The Buddha taught that everyone has the potential to become spiritually awake. Syd Arthur is the upshot of Frankel’s contemplative musings as to what the path of the historical Buddha, born Prince Siddhartha, might look like today through the eyes of Syd Arthur, a middle-aged Jewish suburban woman.

Syd is a middle-aged Jewish woman who is *potentially* awake, but likes to start her day with a strong cup of coffee, just in case. Her daughter has just left for college, and her diet is once again off track. While for most of her life she has been convinced that happiness can be attained by a magical number on the bathroom scale—or a really great shopping day at Bloomingdales—she finds herself in the grocery store with an empty shopping cart wondering if there just might be something more. After a tragic accident shakes her town and stirs up long buried pain, Syd finds herself questioning the meaning of her life.

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When East unexpectedly meets West, she embarks on a journey as a spiritual seeker ignoring her Mah Jongg group's insistence that this is merely a midlife crisis. Soon Syd is in over her chakras as her search takes her from the yoga studio, to the meditation hall, to the ashram's gift store and to the pages of the *Zensation* catalogue. But once she discovers how to sift through the fluff and reach to the core, nothing can stop her journey toward Nirvana, not even the hottest sale at Nordstrom's.

Follow Syd as she finds her bliss and discovers a richness that rivals a Godiva truffle, making for one delicious enlightenment.

Syd Arthur

By Ellen Frankel

Pearlson Press

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www.authorellenfrankel.com

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Advanced Praise for Syd Arthur

A tour de force! This remarkable novel is full of humor, Buddhist wisdom, and Yiddishkeit. Art awakens us to new ways of seeing and being, and this novel is like an alarm clock.

Lama Surya Das, author of the *New York Times* Bestseller, *Awakening The Buddha Within*.

Syd Arthur's journey toward enlightenment is a laugh-out-loud adventure full of wit and wisdom. A must read, this book will touch your spirit and funny bone, awaken your senses, and nourish your soul.

Joan Borysenko, author of the *New York Times* Bestseller, *Minding the Body, Mending the Mind*.

...a truly touching book with great spiritual insights to carry you long after the last page has been read.

Rabbi Baruch HaLevi, Congregation Shirat Hayam, Swampscott, Massachusetts.

About the Author

Ellen Frankel, LCSW worked in the field of eating disorder treatment and prevention for over fifteen years. She has been interviewed on topics related to eating issues, body image and heightism by national newspapers, traditional and online magazines, as well as national radio programs across the country, and has appeared on local and national television including *NBC's Today Show*, *CBS's Early Show*, *CNN's Paula Zahn Show*, Fox News' *Your World with Neil Cavuto* and *The Dr. Phil Show*. Ellen is a dynamic speaker and frequent presenter at national conferences on a variety of topics including eating disorders, spirituality and heightism.

In addition to her latest book, *Syd Arthur* (Pearlsong Press April 15, 2011), Ellen is the author of *Beyond Measure: A Memoir About Short Stature and Inner Growth* (Pearlsong Press 2006) and is the co-author of *The Diet Survivor's Handbook: 60 Lessons in Eating, Acceptance and Self-Care* (Sourcebooks 2006) and *Beyond A Shadow of a Diet: The Therapist's Guide to Treating Compulsive Eating* (Brunner-Routledge 2004). She has also published in professional journals and has been featured in local newspapers including *The Boston Globe*, *The Jewish Journal North of Boston* and *The Jewish Advocate*.

Ellen lives in Marblehead, Massachusetts with her husband, Steve, and dog, Karma. She has recently experienced the empty nest first hand as both her daughter and son are currently in college. Happily for her, they both accepted her friend request on *Facebook*.

Suggested Interview Questions:

1. So many people believe that true happiness and fulfillment can be found by achieving a magic number on the bathroom scale. What is this about? Why should this concern us? Who really stands to benefit from this quest?
2. The historical Buddha, born Prince Siddhartha, left the extravagance of his palace walls to travel a spiritual path. Eventually, sitting under a Bodhi tree, he reached enlightenment and became known as the Buddha, which means *one who is awake*, and spent his life teaching that everyone has the potential to awaken. What is your message in writing a book entitled, *Syd Arthur*, about a middle-aged Jewish woman living in the cloistered world of suburbia?
3. What do you mean by 'awakening?' What does it mean to be spiritually awake?
4. We live in a consumer driven society where even spirituality can become a commodity to be packaged and marketed. How can one travel a spiritual path without getting caught in the trappings? What are some signs to watch out for?
5. Why do you think Buddhism has become so popular in the West?
6. It is estimated that 30% of Western Buddhists are Jewish (Ju-Bus or Bu-Jus). Why are so many Jews drawn toward Buddhism?
7. What has your spiritual path looked like?
8. Our lives are so busy; we drive-thru for our coffee, lunch, banking and dry cleaning; we are constantly checking our laptops, iPhones, Blackberries and iPads; we're twittering, texting, and checking facebook. Is it possible for us to slow down? To turn off so we can truly reconnect? How can the teachings of the East help us navigate the pace of the West?
9. Syd Arthur, a long-time dieter, eventually gives up the weight loss plans and becomes an attuned (intuitive) eater. What does that mean, and what does that look like? Why are you a proponent of giving up dieting? How does this way of eating fit with a more spiritual lifestyle? How does attuned eating relate to attuned living and the Buddha's path?
10. What are the benefits of meditation? Can anyone do it, and does it have to be part of a spiritual tradition?