



## Book Recommendation

### Anam Cara by John O'Donohue

As many of you will know, I have been blending travel and work over the past few months. This has included relishing the opportunity of spending significant time in Scotland, particularly in the Orkney Islands, the Isle of Skye, and Glencoe. As many of you will also know, I am a keen reader and my preference still lies with holding and feeling a physical book. The twelve physical books I brought over in my checked-in baggage weighed almost 4kgs – or 20% of my allowance – but it has been well worth it.

One of the books I brought along with me, with the goal of dipping in and out of, as we immersed ourselves in the Scottish highlands and the awesomeness of nature, was the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition of John O'Donohue's *Anam Cara: A book of Celtic wisdom*.

I know some readers will be familiar with John's poetry and writings and this book has certainly established itself as a 'revered classic.' O'Donohue is an Irish poet and philosopher and in this book he brings to life the wisdom of the ancient Celts. He uses authentic Irish prayers and blessings and shares over 100 powerful insights arranged into the six categories of: Friendship, Senses, Solitude, Work, Aging, and Death. I recognise that I am late to the party – but I have now arrived at the party!

I suspect, 'party' is the wrong term, as John's philosophy invites you into a deep, personal journey of discovery. Neuropsychiatrist and bestselling author, Dan Siegel, suggests that you will find John a soul friend on your own journey through life, offering support and solace, clarity and consciousness.' This rings true to my experience, and no doubt true to what the late John O'Donohue was hoping, as *Anam Cara* is the Celtic phrase for the concept of 'soul friend'.

As a way of commending this book, I thought I would share several phrases from just one of the pieces in *Anam Cara*, that has particularly resonated with me on my trip. It is titled 'To Grow Is To Change'. John starts by exploring how 'possibility and change remain so faithful to us.' What a powerful phrase. If we could help each young person, each human, appreciate that possibility and change will remain present in our lives, then this can help us navigate challenges and manage times when we feel helpless or stuck.

Several further phrases from John within this piece include: "...Possibility and change become growth within the shape of time that we call a day. Days are where we live. This rhythm shapes our lives. Your life takes the form of each new day that is given to you. ... The new day deepens what has already happened and unfolds what is surprising, unpredictable, and creative. You may wish to change your life, but your new vision remains merely talk until it enters the practice of your day."

I have enjoyed reflecting upon such wise words, as I consider how to best spend my day – knowing that it is a challenge, and knowing that it is also all that I have – to endeavour to spend each day well.

I leave you with a quote John shares in the book from Polish poet Tadeusz Rozewicz, that 'it is more difficult to spend a day well than to write a book.' Sue and I have experienced the joys and challenges of writing a book – and we found it difficult, but quite possibly not as difficult as living a day well. Personally, and I know for many of our friends at **my manifesto**, something that is an



incredible help for providing clarity and assistance in living a day well has been a personal manifesto.