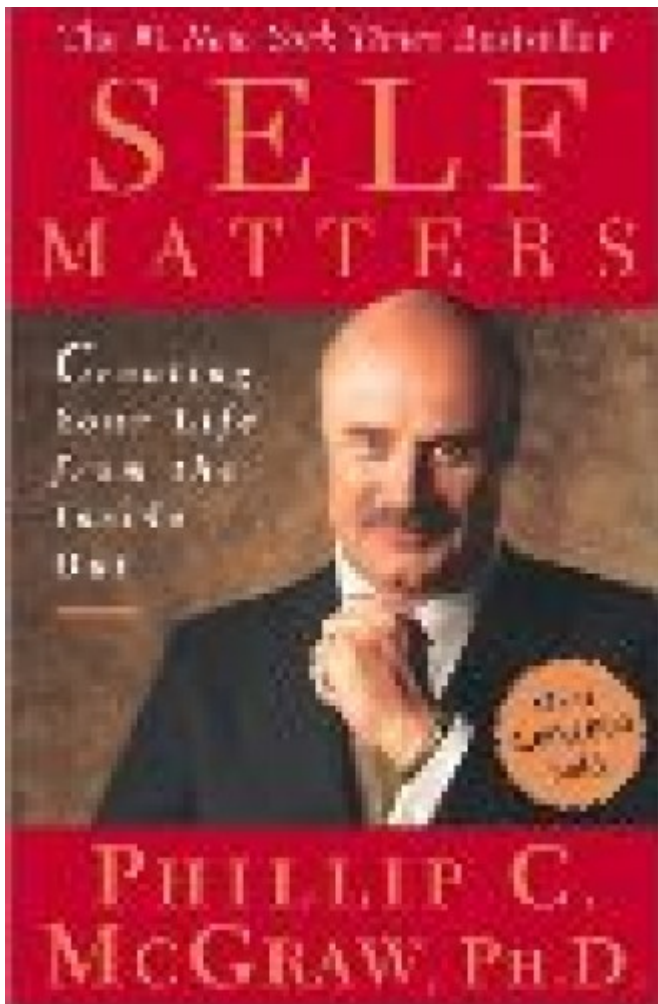


Getting real with Dr. Phil

By [Marcia Z. Nelson](#) in the [September 25, 2002](#) issue

In Review



Self Matters: Creating Your Life from the Inside out

Phillip C. McGraw
Simon & Schuster

Psychologist Phillip C. McGraw, Oprah Winfrey's regular guest and now the star of his own TV show, is Oprah's Oprah—one of her "pivotal people" (to use his term).

Dr. Phil, as he is known (his Ph.D is from the University of Tulsa), entered her life after Texas cattlemen sued her for slandering beef. She had sworn off hamburgers during a 1996 show on mad cow disease. McGraw's litigation consulting firm, Courtroom Sciences, helped her win the case, and he won her confidence. He began appearing on her show in 1998.

The Texan is noted for his "Get re-e-eal here" manner. He's a 21st-century cowpoke, genteel enough to talk to the ladies but cowboy enough to punch out the BSers. He uses solid mainstream psychology and is well organized and highly accessible. He does psychology without the footnotes.

The tongue-lashing part of the prescription is more pronounced on TV than in print. The best-selling *Self Matters* is larded with lots of you-can-do-it positive regard and encouragement. "I intend for you to meet yourself and discover every unique gift, skill and ability that has been bestowed upon you," he writes.

The aim of the book is to help readers discover their "authentic self"—the one attuned to one's deepest needs and passions—and abandon the inauthentic self defined by fears and other people's expectations. The book is introspection 101, offering a concrete way to take a self-inventory, with questions provided (What have been your psychologically defining moments? How have you been labeled? What are your fixed beliefs?) He tells people to become aware of the noises inside that constitute a running internal dialog, to toss the old scripts and freshen the perceptual filters. Tinkering under the hood of self can be fascinating. When you get past the showmanship, Dr. Phil is preaching an ancient message: Know thyself.

See also [Oprah on a mission: Dispensing a gospel of health and happiness](#), by Marcia Z. Nelson