

Everyone says to be yourself, but what that means is anyone's guess. For existential philosopher Simone de Beauvoir, authenticity is not the revelation of a true self, but an exhilarating quest toward fulfillment. Her view, central to existentialism, is that we exist first and then spend the rest of our lives creating—not discovering—who we are. To be authentic is to live in pursuit of self-creation and self-renewal, with many different paths toward diverse goals.

How to Be Authentic is a lively introduction to Simone de Beauvoir's philosophy of existentialism, as well as an exploration of the successes and failures that Beauvoir and other women have experienced in striving toward authenticity. Skye Cleary takes us through some of life's major relationships and milestones—friendship, romantic love, marriage, children, and death—and examines how each offers an opportunity for us to stretch toward authenticity. While many people don't get to choose their path in life—whether because of systemic oppression or the actions of other individuals—Cleary makes a compelling case that Beauvoir's ideas can help us become more conscious of living purposefully, thoughtfully, and with vitality, and she shows us how to do so in responsible ways that invigorate every person's right to become poets of their own lives.

SKYE C. CLEARY, PHD is a philosopher and writer. She teaches at Columbia University, Barnard College, and the City University of New York, and is the author of *Existentialism and Romantic Love* and coeditor of *How to Live a Good Life*. Cleary's writing has appeared in *The Paris Review*, *Aeon*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, TED-Ed, and *Los Angeles Review of Books*, among other outlets. She won the 2017 New Philosopher Writers' Award and was a 2021 MacDowell Fellow. She lives in New York City with her partner and son.

READ BY GABRA ZACKMAN



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and the Quest
for Fulfillment

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