

Black Swan: The Twelve Lessons of Abandonment Recovery

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“The Allegory of the Little Girl on the Rock” forms the basis of this aid to recovery after the loss of a love. The author, a psychotherapist experienced in abandonment issues, was working through a painful loss in her own life and none of the existing literature seemed sufficient to address the depth of the pain she and her clients experienced. Then the black swan appeared at the harbor where she walked, and her observations of his lonely yet dignified presence among the white swans inspired the writing of the allegory.

Intended only for adult readers and designed as an adjunct to professional therapy for those who need it to maintain their well being and emotional stability, the story tells of a little girl who is led by her father into the woods and placed alone at the top of a tall rock where she is left to die. Expecting her father to return for her at any moment, the girl waits patiently for a time but then begins to panic as she realizes that he is not coming back. When she finally accepts that no amount of calling or fearful screaming will bring him to her, she attempts to descend and find the path that will lead her home. Injured in her fall from the rock, hungry and disoriented, she loses her way in the woods. When she finally arrives at home, she observes her family happily involved in all the good things she once had shared with them, oblivious to her absence. They are, in fact, preparing to leave the area, and she will be left behind. Knowing herself to be truly abandoned, she withdraws and wanders alone until a series of events leads her to a mysterious wise woman who becomes her teacher and to the lone black swan whose courage inspires her return to wholeness.

The author states that “through many years of working with people, I found that the most effective way to internalize messages of growth and recovery is through metaphor. Storytelling bypasses the internal gatekeepers-the unconscious mechanisms that keep us locked in patterns of self-sabotage.”

Reading the allegory engages the emotions of the reader in a way that no textbook on recovery could. By entering the girl’s struggle to find healing, self-worth and trust in others the reader is led to experience the emotions of loss and grief and to travel the healing journey within his or her own imagination. The twelve steps to recovery are also outlined in the final pages of the book together with exercises that make each step vivid and easy to recall.

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