ForeWord Reviews

SELF-HELP

Don't Blame the Game: The Compelling Account of a Quadriplegic Who Took on the World and Won

Clarence Phillip Trausch
Michael Schwass
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“What kind of constitution does it take to mount a lifelong fight against the plight of being consigned to a body that is inert?” asks the author. As a teenage athlete and star hockey player, Schwass sustained catastrophic neck injuries with a blow to his spinal cord during a hockey game. In this book, Schwass, together with Trausch, his mentor of twenty-nine years who is also a former monk, police criminal investigator, and psychologist, tells the story of the accident, its aftermath, and the life of discipline, will, and learning that Schwass pursued in order to walk unaided and live independently.

Chapters that narrate the unfolding events alternate with sections of dialogue between the authors, reflecting on the lessons learned from facing the ordeal head-on. From an idyllic life before the accident, through surgeries, hospitalizations, rehab, relationships, and his quest to find trainers, healers, and guides willing to help him achieve what were considered impossible goals, Schwass spins a compelling and inspiring tale.

He achieved a kind of celebrity, was finally able to walk, as reported in *USA Today* in September 1982, and began giving motivational speeches. “I had organized a complete discipline, including mind training, insight and inspiration, physical therapy, biofeedback, and a proactive, persevering attitude … I did not give myself much credit for the endless and intense hours of motivational work … I would only come to that realization with the passage of years.” This book traces this author’s dramatic ups and downs, from the heady exhilaration of stardom and media coverage to an ever-present awareness of loss and pain.

Schwass’s grueling discipline, unwavering commitment to spiritual principles, and family, helpers, and guides, all together have given him the support to face daily and often excruciating pain, surgeries that require him to relearn how to care for himself, the death of his beloved mother, relationships that didn’t last, and the hastening physical deterioration common with quadriplegics. His take on doctors and healing professionals is poignant, as so many simply declared his goals impossible. He has worked with a lifetime of helpers, and offers advice on

making the most of such relationships.

Most moving, Schwass discusses the life-long support of his family and offers unique and powerful insights on the issues of death and mortality. His perceptive reflections on anger, education, the handicapped, relationships, the power of purpose, living, dying, and playing the game all further his goal to serve humanity through his speeches and writings. With an honesty that reverberates deeply for the able-bodied, athletes, and the handicapped alike, this inspirational story reiterates the power that can grow from self-reflection, courage, and faith.