



Grow Yourself Beautiful: A Smart Girl's Guide to Following Her Heart and Focusing on Her Inner Joy

Sharon Caldwell Peddle

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Grow Yourself Beautiful is a caring self-help companion for teenage girls who long to feel beautiful.

Sharon Caldwell Peddie's *Grow Yourself Beautiful* is a compassionate self-help guide for teen girls seeking true beauty and deep meaning.

For those entering young womanhood, this book offers needed assurance that they're not alone. Its practical help is broken down, letter by letter, to form the word "beautiful." It is focused on understanding one's identity and sense of self in a healthy, balanced way.

While it brims with possibility and hopefulness, the text also acknowledges the pressures that today's young women face, as well as their many options and freedoms. This approach is balanced, focusing on the self without encouraging self-centeredness. While its advice—such as "Practice random acts of kindness in all areas of your life"—is certain to bring about tangible results, it shuns perfectionism and performance-oriented living.

The structure, in which "B is for Be Kind" and "L is for Love," is catchy—easy to follow and remember, but not so cutesy as to alienate those seeking serious support. The book shows how kindness and thankfulness can be life-changing by granting new perspectives and leading to more fulfilling relationships with oneself and others. The book also shows how to build its concepts into one's daily life through actions, habits, and intentional ways of thinking—like taking time to unplug from electronics, spending time alone, and learning about new things that interest you.

Open and flexible to different personalities and interests, the book makes room for each reader to define and express themselves even within the outlined framework of beauty. For example, Peddie incorporates her own story of faith in God, which is based in her Catholic upbringing and spurred on by the pain of her parents' divorce, but the book's call to faith is open to other traditions or expressions of belief.

Short chapters and long lists of ideas make the content easy to digest, and journaling pages invite readers to process what they're learning. Short questions—such as "What do I enjoy learning about in school? In life?"—appear at the tops of sections to jump-start readers' processing, though they leave plenty of space for exploration and self-discovery.

The book's tone is uneven, though. Its opening poem is wordy, and a repeated exhortation to grow in different ways feels overwhelming rather than inviting. The preface seems to be addressed more to adults than to teens, and the introduction feels overly specific. The body of the book hits its stride with a warm, maternal tone that indicates respect for the young audience.

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MELISSA WUSKE (March 29, 2019)

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