

Heal: An Owner's Manual for How to Heal Emotional Wounds and Live Your Truth

Aimee Semas-Day

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Heal is a calm, practical self-help guide that names methods for healing from one's past, and for understanding one's emotions going forward.

Aimee Semas-Day's self-help book *Heal* is about recovering from emotional scars and developing a healthier sense of self.

Semas-Day says that understanding one's brain is a key to understanding how emotions are processed. Thus, her book begins with a discussion of the parts of the brain, showing how each regulates one's thoughts and emotions. The lower, reptilian brain is contrasted with the higher, thinking brain, and strategies for getting and staying in higher brain modes are outlined.

The book's topical chapters cover emotions, repression, healing, self-talk, romantic relationships, boundaries, and goal setting. Each chapter aims to help audiences work through their traumas and negative emotions. They are composed of brief discussions, anecdotes, guidance, and exercises, as with tasks like communicating with one's inner child, exploring healthier boundaries, journaling, and writing letters to those who caused one harm in the past.

The tone is conversational and encouraging throughout. Semas-Day's personal stories are present to indicate that the book's approach works, but the book also draws on her expertise as a therapist, which informs its exercises. They are gentle about encouraging audiences to acknowledge and move on from negative aspects of their pasts, as well as to train their brains to avoid and replace those negative thoughts and feelings in the future. For example, an exercise on negative self-talk guides users through excavating the roots of their negative thoughts, determining valid replacements for those expressions, and healing. Further, there are suggestions for daily activities that honor the body, mind, and spirit, including exercise and meditation. Practical advice, as on how to take time-outs when situations get heated, also stand to improve one's relationships with others.

This ambitious work may require the additional help of a therapist, but the book functions as a good starting point. Used alone, it stands to help people heal from minor emotional traumas; used in concert with therapy, its advice could go further. Indeed, Semas-Day advises those with deeper painful scars to seek professional help, too, rather than doing their work alone.

The process of healing takes more time and effort, but for those who are ready to do the work: *Heal* is a calm, practical self-help guide that names methods for healing from one's past, and for understanding one's emotions going forward.

SARAH WHITE (June 4, 2022)

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