

Home Is Within You

Nadia Davis

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Nadia Davis's memoir *Home Is Within You* is about the wide impact of personal healing.

Davis, a California lawyer, spent much of her life engaged in public works. She was active in her community, and the wife of a state official. But here, her story centers on the experiences of learning to work outside of the public eye, and to pursue personal health and growth. The book is straightforward in detailing challenges like an abusive relationship, a traumatic car accident, public scrutiny, and addiction and mental health difficulties. It also covers her family lineage. For Davis: healing had to come from within.

This methodical work is marked by intimate scenes. Involving conversations and rich details enliven it, as do Davis's evocative summaries of large spans of time. It departs from pure personal narration to introduce poems, letters, and journal entries of varying texture and depth.

One of the key themes of the book is discovering and living out one's personal identity. Davis's own identities included that of a lawyer, a person in recovery, and a spiritual helper, though her strongest was that of a mother. As she came into herself, she learned to root her sense of who she was, and what her purpose was, in motherhood—a place of relationship and nurture. This came to infuse every area of her life, including self-care. Indeed, the chapter titles are addressed to her sons, ranging from abstract to practical: "Dear Son, when I visited the angels, you were there" and "Dear Son, always wear your seat belt."

The text is also powerful in addressing how Davis's public and private lives melded—though often, the two were in conflict. It muses toward a call for a healthier balance between the two, aspiring for a world in which, rather than shaming people for their struggles, communities can learn to help individuals find healing and health, all within supportive relationships. As a model, Davis thinks back on her family memories, which mix love and laughter with periods of "depressed self-medicating drink[ing]." Some struggles, she finds, are rooted within our family pasts; still, Davis manages to craft her personal identity distinct from these challenges, ensuring that responsibility lies with herself.

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MELISSA WUSKE (December 9, 2021)

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