

## Josie Released from Within

### Josie Coghlan

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*Coghlan generously offers the story of her trauma and healing to comfort and encourage others.*

Josie Coghlan shares her story of struggle and hard-won triumph over mental illness in *Josie Released from Within*.

When a person's world crumbles, it can happen fast; in the wake of such trauma may be soul-deep bewilderment and slow recovery. Coghlan gives life to these ideas in her memoir of struggle and of overcoming abuse, depression, anxiety, shame, and guilt. She tells firsthand what it's like to go through severe psychological distress: "I soon found myself spiralling [sic] down without self-control, and then confusion set in, confronting everything head-on. This caused me to shut down." While many of the images and descriptions feel familiar, they carry the weight and impact of her voice. Her personal story highlights key themes: the destructive power of bad relationships, the healing power of good relationships, and the slow, painful, beautiful process of inner healing.

This book will appeal most to people who, like Coghlan, have been through or are going through trauma and inner healing. Coghlan offers understanding, hope, and the chance to learn from the highs and lows of her healing process. The author's voice will also help sufferers' loved ones to develop compassion and understanding. It's clear the writing process was cathartic for her, but she strives to provide a therapeutic reading experience as well.

The book is slim, but the pages are packed with fairly small type. Coghlan gives more time to major life events, and also shows that life and recovery are made up of the small, seemingly mundane details of everyday life. The conversational tone lays bare Coghlan's life on the pages, but leads to some meandering paragraphs and lapses in organization.

Some of the chapter titles give a very effective, clear sense of the key events or themes of the chapter—such as "My First Nervous Breakdown"—but others are overly detailed or far too ambiguous: "My Issues at Work Were Sorted, Jacob's Issues at School Were Sorted Out, and Now It Is Martin's Turn to Get Help for His Work Issues" or "2012."

At first glance the cover feels stark, but it matches the somewhat cold, solitary, yet strong tone of the book. While the image is powerful, it doesn't give a sense of what the book will be about—or even that it's a memoir rather than a novel. The back cover copy indicates that this is a personal story, but is a bit too vague to be enticing (including phrases like "a set of events" and "the most vulnerable set of circumstances").

Coghlan generously offers the trauma and healing of her life as a comfort and encouragement.

MELISSA WUSKE (January 13, 2015)

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