

Masked: Relationship Abuse and Recovery Guide

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Dog Ear Publishing (Sep 1, 2017)

Softcover (112pp)

978-1-4575-5690-6

Masked provides a thoughtful road map out of unhealthy relationships.

Therapist Cherry D. Weber has seen patients mask who they are in order to survive abusive relationships, and in her latest book, *Masked*, she provides insight on how to identify and recover from that abuse.

The book opens with a powerful statement: "Inside you are a spirit, light, and potential." In the course of destructive relationships, though, such light becomes dimmed, as abused partners learn to suppress their true selves. In healthy relationships, the book reminds its audience, partners recognize and respect each other's needs; in unhealthy ones, a partner will suppress their partner with emotional, physical, or psychological abuse, and then it is time to leave. *Masked* is the blueprint for exiting such relationships.

The book's prose is straightforward, driving right at its points. It steers clear of medical and psychological jargon, instead arguing in favor of leaving abusive relationships with logic specifically designed to reach people at their most vulnerable moments. Beyond these passages of straightforward advice are examples, including profiles of the ripple effects that abuse has, even past the bounds of the toxic relationship itself.

The book's clear writing is reinforced by its thoughtful structure. Reflecting the fact that healing is a process, the work is organized to help anyone, at any stage—from those who are wondering whether their relationships are abusive to those who are trying to date again after leaving and starting over. Some chapters repeat points, but each chapter can be read in a self-contained manner, making crossover a minor distraction, and resulting in a book that is easy to pick up and reference.

Chapters run no more than a few pages each. Points are presented neatly with bulleted lists and helpful graphics. The book includes checklists for evaluating a relationship, identifying abusers, and recognizing abuse. Each section ends with a set of questions and spaces for a response.

The real strength of *Masked* is its tone. From its first line, a deep sense of warmth and empathy comes through every passage—even those that warn about how abuse can turn deadly. Throughout the text, abused people are given permission to believe that abuse is happening to them, and are presented with the necessary reminder that abuse isn't the abused person's fault.

Everyone deserves a healthy relationship, and *Masked* provides a road map out of relationships that are not healthy. It should be in any therapist or counselor's collection.

KATERIE PRIOR (November 14, 2017)

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