



Pathways to Serenity. Overcoming Your Addictions One Day at a Time

David Palmer

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This presentation of a vast variety of perspectives on addiction recovery and prevention deserves a wide audience.

For those battling addiction, serenity is often an elusive or unattainable state. In *Pathways to Serenity*, a broad-ranging and comprehensive chronicle of the recovery movement, David Palmer provides an exhaustive overview of twelve-step programs, examining the challenging paths toward a better life from a variety of perspectives.

Palmer first shares his own struggles, detailing with sincere candor how alcohol abuse tore his family apart and put his health and career in serious jeopardy. He bravely faces up to the damage his addiction caused those nearest to him. He also shares a wide range of other addicts' stories, skillfully selecting men and women of all backgrounds, ages, and ethnic groups. By choosing such a broad array of individuals and detailing their idiosyncrasies with such care, the author successfully debunks any tendency to pigeonhole addiction as belonging to any one group.

Throughout the text, Palmer conveys the subjects' humanity and seeks to dispel the shame that surrounds this often misunderstood condition. While maintaining a gripping intensity in his narratives, he neither sensationalizes nor patronizes and is successful in providing well-rounded, relatable portrayals that are realistic and compelling. The book contains a great deal of practical advice for those who battle addiction and encouragement for those who care for and counsel them. A clear message of hope is offered, as Palmer emphasizes repeatedly how it is possible to change ingrained habits, pick up the pieces, and strive toward a quality of life few could have imagined possible in their darkest moments.

As someone who has dedicated a large part of his life to the recovery movement, Palmer is extremely knowledgeable about the various groups that deal with the problem. He also offers a wealth of interesting background on the psychiatric, health, and societal factors that lead to a wide variety of addictions, deciphering this complex topic for the layperson. His dedication to and knowledge of this cause are truly impressive in scale.

The book presents valuable insights into the particular elements unique to young addicts and addicts within the prison population, as well as the pain experienced by the family of those in the grip of addiction. Above all, Palmer recognizes that so much of the emotional and behavioral patterns leading to addiction have their roots in insufficient and misguided parenting.

Palmer never fails to recognize that recovery is an ongoing process—a path that never ends, along which a great deal of fellowship and self-improvement can take place. Given the amount of pain he describes, his section on effective parenting designed to prevent addiction and other psychological problems could perhaps be excerpted, repackaged, and expanded upon in the form of a parenting book. In doing so, Palmer could perhaps reach a wider public than those specifically seeking out a title within the recovery category. Such a book would be a worthy follow-up to this valuable text.

SEAMUS MULLARKEY (March 4, 2014)

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