

Silent Lucidity: Finding the Words through the Illusion of Normalcy

Olivia Benson

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Silent Lucidity is a heroic and delicate tale of healing from familial sexual abuse.

Olivia Benson's chilling and forthright memoir *Silent Lucidity* recalls the deep trauma of incest and illustrates how healing comes from bringing secrets into the light.

Incest is a deeply uncomfortable topic—just the mention of the term causes people to clam up. For survivors, the effects are insidious and far-reaching, tainting every area of life even decades and decades later. This book brings it all into the open, shunning secrecy and banishing shame. In doing so, it invites healing and hope, even in the face of a most unspeakable crime.

On the surface, Benson has a good life: a spouse, children, a house, and a job. But inside she knows that something is wrong. Secrecy and shame about what her father did to her are wrecking her life.

Incest has affected Benson deeply; her physical, mental, and emotional health all suffered because of abuse. This personal reflection seeks understanding of her patterns of coping and why she has difficulty expressing emotion; in writing it all out, she seeks to revive whatever personal growth was initially stunted. The book conveys deep emotional insights thanks to committed personal reflections, sharing how Benson emerged from a lonely, painful journey into a life of wholeness that she never before thought possible.

This healing narrative stands as a valiant, brave act. Its structure and pace are dictated by its individual therapeutic goals; while it is compelling, even harrowing, to read, the narrative is not constructed to be centered on satisfying the reader. Benson's path to healing is winding at times; the pace varies. What pulls the book forward is her boldness and her insatiable desire to feel whole. The tone is matter of fact and raw; by refusing to hide or sugarcoat unpleasant events and feelings, it stands against shame.

This content is disturbing and chilling, bringing out the cold hard facts of the abuse Benson suffered. Still, it operates with restraint, focusing most on the healing that comes from calling situations out for what they are. In some ways, the most deeply moving parts of the book are more understated, as with its coverage of Benson's relationship with, and even care for, her father in the months leading up to his death. Such moments, filled as they are with unexpected and conflicted feelings, provide the text with a depth that only a survivor could manage.

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MELISSA WUSKE (June 20, 2018)

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