ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

SELF-HELP

The Smile Inside
Lisa Sapiro
CreateSpace
978-1-4905-5269-9
Three Stars (out of Five)

Humor and a positive attitude bring an emotional edge to this weight-loss memoir.

In *The Smile Inside*, a memoir designed to motivate, Lisa Sapiro shares the ups and downs of her journey to weight loss—and the mental and physical health she developed along the way. She shares the pain of growing up overweight, her disappointment in supposed weight-loss solutions like gastric bypass, and how she took control of her habits to build the happy, healthy life she always wanted.

In page after page, Sapiro's positive, encouraging attitude shines through. With optimism and experience, the author shows how to stop making excuses and start making changes. Her voice is that of a friend rather than a therapist or medical professional. For example, she writes, "I truly believe that anyone out there, my age group especially, needs to understand that a doctor cannot tell you how you are. Nor can a bully, your mother, or your coworker. You have to feel your body, understand it, and listen to it." Sapiro's writing style is clear and personal. Within the text, there are occasional sentence fragments as well as a lack of polish to the prose. Motivation, rather than medical advice, is manifest in this book.

Sapiro's humor lightens what could be a stressful topic. She doesn't make fun of her former, heavier self—she has far too much self-respect for that—but she discusses painful memories with levity: "Until I lost weight, my clothes always made me stand out. I could never find a pair of jeans to fit me so I was stuck wearing the 'pick-on-me' polyester pants."

Throughout the book, the author uses the word "normal" (always in italics) to designate clothes, problems, and experiences reserved for those who are not overweight: "I dreaded having to change in front of the *normal* girls." Those who've struggled with their weight may identify with Sapiro's feeling of being an outsider and be encouraged to watch her overcome physical challenges and emotional pain to gain a healthier mental and physical identity. "I do not have to worry about clothes shopping, food shopping, walking, enduring crowds, dealing

with blood pressure medications, and many other daunting tasks from my past," she writes. "Life is happy now, and it is because I choose to be happy. I did all of this after the age of 40."

At the end of the book, Sapiro shares her exercise and diet routines, songs, and quotes that keep her motivated and inspired, and quick tips for a healthy weight-loss attitude. The diet and exercise goals are somewhat specific to Sapiro; the volume would benefit from an explanation of how to adapt the routines and principles for different circumstances. Sapiro's daily schedule includes three walks and a trip to the gym, and she provides readers with guidelines for a Standard Process Cleanse diet.

Saprio is a knowing friend who has battled weight and the social and emotional adversity that comes with it, and her memoir reflects this encouragingly.

Melissa Wuske