

Little Madhouse on the Prairie

Professional Endorsements

THERE IS A WAY OUT OF A PAINFUL PAST

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The title alone is enough to make you want to pick up the book, *Little Madhouse on the Prairie: A True-Life Story of Overcoming Abuse and Healing the Spirit*, by Marion Elizabeth Witte, and read it. But this is no charming story of a Laura Ingalls character. It is a heartfelt and often painful to read account of a childhood weighed down by abuse, alcoholism, incredible hardship and abandonment.

Having said that, the book is extraordinary in that it shows very clearly that it is possible to overcome such a dismal and unpromising past and go on to achieve a happy and normal life. No, it isn't easy. Getting over such a horrific past couldn't possibly be easy and, as Ms. Witte is the first to say, it takes some doing on a continual basis. Not the getting over it, but the getting beyond it.

You see, there are the reminders that come along when you least expect it. You see a mother chastising her child in the store and you're immediately brought right back to that painfully dark place in your memory of the time when you were so abused by one of your parents. It could be a harsh word that you hear or a certain look on someone's face that you wince at – because it makes you recall episodes where all you wanted to do was run and hide from an abusive parent or sibling.

Ms. Witte certainly takes the reader through those bleak days on the prairie, and her writing, while not overtly explicit in the painful details, is vivid enough that anyone can understand how difficult an upbringing she endured. How would any of us react to being locked in a dark and dirty cellar in the middle of winter, one crawling with mice and rats? Or being forced to sleep in our own urine-soaked bed when we've had an accident? Or forced to wear boy's hand-me-down clothes (when we're a girl)? How would we deal with an alcoholic father who abandoned us emotionally as well as physically? If he wasn't there for us when we needed protecting, that's abandonment, plain and simple. And Ms. Witte had to endure all of this. No wonder she couldn't wait to escape, as so many children who are abused wind up doing.

But just getting out of the abusive household does nothing to eradicate the painful past. This is another lesson that Ms. Witte learned and passes along to readers. It seems that you carry the past right along with you, whether you like it or not. Of course, she tried to block out the memories, just as others who have suffered childhood abuse have done. But they are always there under the surface, ready to rise up and alter behavior today. That is, unless the individual goes into therapy, seeks the support and encouragement of others, and embarks on a journey of self-discovery and self-healing.

The funny thing about healing from childhood abuse, whether the abuse is physical, sexual, or psychological, is that it may seem to others that everything is fine. The individual may appear perfectly composed, capable, not at all troubled by the past, when what is really going on is that their emotions

are in turmoil. They may be at a breaking point and not even know it. It may even turn out that, just like in Ms. Witte's experience, their body will turn against them. If we ignore what is unhealed, we will continue to suffer. Worst of all, our lives will continue to remain unfulfilled. We will sabotage relationships with those we love and end promising careers, thwart our hopes for future happiness – if we even dare to believe that we could ever truly be happy.

Healing, then, is something that those who have suffered abuse must work at – but they cannot heal by themselves. They require assistance from professionals, those trained in helping individuals overcome past abuse and trauma, learn new coping skills and behaviors, and begin, most of all, to believe that they are worthwhile and worthy of love.

Whether you are yourself the victim of childhood abuse or you know someone who is, this book will help you realize that there is a way out of the painful past. There is hope and promise available. The first step is to acknowledge that hope does exist. The next step is to go after it by seeking professional help.

Why did Ms. Witte write this book? Why did she reveal so much about her past? Her words are very direct: "I offer my story as a confirmation of my belief that all events and circumstances in life have purpose. Sometimes we find out what the purpose is immediately. Sometimes we spend a lifetime trying to figure it out. And sometimes, I imagine, we never really do know.... I humbly offer myself as an example that the human spirit can rise above any obstacles presented to it. I know my life has been divinely guided. And if mine has been, then so has yours."

A BOOK THAT ENGENDERS HOPE

Nan Gold, M.A., MFT

Past President of the Southern California Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

In ***Little Madhouse on the Prairie***, Marion describes the abuse she suffered as a child and the actions she took to recover from the abuse. As a therapist, I am struck with her progression from being a victim to personal empowerment. That came with the commitment to heal herself, not merely to survive the abuse, but to thrive. Her journey through various modes of healing will be valuable to others who have not yet made this journey. In the final section, Lessons I have Learned, the reader will gain an understanding of how childhood abuse can affect one's behavior in the present. The book engenders hope because Ms. Witte shows that it is not the abuse itself, but rather her responses to the abuse that creates the person one becomes.

A PROVOCATIVE READ

The Rev. Dr. Addyse Lane Palagyi
The Episcopal Church Diocese of Oregon

To be of real interest, every character you meet, either in life or in a book, must be vulnerable, resilient and, finally, able to endure and survive. Ms. Witte, in her memoir of childhood abuse, reveals all of these qualities and takes us with her on a voyage of triumphant emerging self-hood. That she felt she had to do it alone is a poignant reminder of her innate strength.

Little Madhouse on the Prairie is a provocative read for anyone who is involved in childhood abuse, either as a secret perpetrator or victim. Witte showed that a person does not need to stay in either role forever, and that a little child can lead parents away from the trap of imitating their own abusive parents. As in most of life, forgiveness is the key to survival. As Witte learns to forgive, her chances of recovery grow steadily. Reading this book can teach one much about forgiveness.

The worst *self-indulgence* this world offers is the cruel parental abuse of a trusting and ever-loving child. This is a good book. Read it and weep for abused children everywhere and try to stop the infection. It is highly contagious.

A VALUABLE TOOL IN MY PRACTICE

Dr. Bunny Vreeland, Ventura, California
Board Certified Clinical Hypnotherapist

I was given *Little Madhouse on the Prairie* some weeks back. After reading it, I was moved to comment on it, in hopes that it will wind up in the hands of those who can benefit from its message.

Marion Witte's story is every child's worst nightmare. The fact that she endured the physical and emotional scares of her childhood is incredible. But, even more amazing, is her intense desire to prevent or help others who might be suffering as she did. The book, "*Little Madhouse on the Prairie: A True-Life Story of Overcoming Abuse and Healing the Spirit*" is her story. Read it if you want to find out what true inspiration really means. I give a copy of 'Madhouse' to many of my clients as a message of hope and help.

I WAS DRAWN INTO THIS BOOK

Dr. Laurie Edgcomb, Ojai, California

It took a lot of courage for me to pick up the book and begin to read “Little Madhouse on the Prairie.” I was afraid I would have nightmares, or it would feel like getting a tooth drilled without Novocain. I thought the subject of child abuse would be too painful. Yet I was surprised to find myself drawn into the scenes in the book with a fascination and interest in exploring just how resilient the spirit can be. I was inspired to know that one can survive that much distress and come out fighting for life, saying “no, you cannot treat me like that anymore,” and with a belief that a child could grow up with the ambition and drive to create a better life. It is inspiring that we as human beings can go thru this much horror and be able to heal to the point of wanting to give something back. It is a sacrifice to write, relive and share the experiences in the book. It is a gift to bring the conditions out that have usually stayed in the closet.

The book is a tool to advocate for children to have the right to have a safe, sane and enriching environment in which to grow up. I am certain more children will be protected because of this book. It is a must read for anyone interested in children, healing and education. Thank you, Marion Witte, for your strength, courage and compassion.

FRIGHTENINGLY INSIGHTFUL

***David Ambroz, Esquire
Executive Director, Los Angeles City College Foundation***

Frighteningly insightful is the phrase that comes to mind. When examining one’s own past, it is helpful to find a well-constructed prism through which clarity can be achieved. Little Madhouse, and the story of achievement despite horrendous circumstances, can provide that vehicle as we survivors examine our pasts to achieve our future free from its burdens.

A MUST READ FOR EVERYONE WHO EVER WAS A CHILD!

Dr. Patricia Carey, Dallas, Texas

It is my true wish that EVERYONE read this book, and recognize the power of acknowledgement and forgiveness – not that we have to forget or condone actions of our families – but recognizing we have a choice to take responsibility for our present life. Marion's book is a MUST READ, as a way to understand how families' behaviors overtly and subtly affect children for the rest of their lives, and how the power of facing the lions and tigers and bears can bring us to a place of acceptance, self-love, and peace.

I doubt there is anyone who doesn't recall some element of an unfortunate event in their childhood, and yet there are so many of us who have experienced the physical and psychological abuse dealt by troubled, yet well-meaning parents, and those memories stay with us and impact us every day. Marion's book is a wonderfully touching revelation of her experiences growing up in a dysfunctional family. It is amazing that she was able to grow into the kind, thoughtful, and loving woman she is now. Reading her book brought to the surface many of my own unfortunate events in earlier years. While painful to look at, it is quite cathartic to face those events now, recognize their impact, and choose to forgive and move on with life.

Marion's book is well written, easy to read, will bring tears to your eyes, and a smile to your face! What a fabulous talent Marion has to be able to touch readers in such a way. Please read Little Madhouse On the Prairie...TODAY!

THE GAME OF TRUE HUMANITY

Michele McCaslin, Attorney at Law, Los Angeles, California
Practice Exclusive to Family Law

It is interesting how some children survive these tragedies and go on to forgive, and be able to love again, as Marion has done. Speaking as a lawyer who defends domestic violence victims in civil court, I know how truly hazardous it is for abuse victims. There are numerous laws which can serve to protect victims, but the problem is the personality of an abuser, who is often cunning and controlling. It is inspiring to hear how Marion survived this "madness" despite the toll it took on her. I was also glad to learn about how she grew as a person, to learn compassion and love, both for her abusers and for herself. She is truly victorious in the game of true humanity.