



Note to Self: 30 Women on Hardship, Humiliation, Heartbreak, and Overcoming It All

Andrea J. Buchanan

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Thirty inspiring women share the enduring lessons they have learned from the defining moments of their lives.

Life rarely works out exactly as we plan. Rejection by a cherished friend, the onset of an unexpected illness, struggle with body image and self-perception -- these experiences may challenge us, but our triumphs come to define us. We find comfort, joy, tears, and laughter in the wisdom, insight, and empathy we gain.

In *Note to Self*, thirty dynamic women share their inspirational stories with writer, director, and television and film producer Andrea Buchanan. Celebrities such as Grammy Award-winning rock star Sheryl Crow and Emmy Award-winning actress Camryn Manheim join stuntwoman Stacy Courtney, football player Katie Hnida, seventy-year-old HIV-positive grandmother Beverly London, and alcoholic-turned-interventionist Candy Finnigan to reflect on their unforgettable stories of redemption. Punctuated by tears and laughter, these poignant tales are full of incredible strength, invaluable knowledge, insurmountable odds, helpful survival instincts, amazing willpower, humiliation -- sometimes on a national level -- and a hefty dose of humor.

These unstoppable women emerged stronger, wiser, and more successful from the often painful and humbling turning points in their lives. While none of their unique stories will fit neatly on a sticky note you can tape to your wall, each of them carries an indelible message that can.

Note to Self: 30 Women on Hardship, Humiliation, Heartbreak, and Overcoming It All Details

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Jennifer says

This book is a collection of 30 different essays by women from all different walks of life—including some celebrities (Sheryl Crow, Camryn Manheim, Mariska Hartigay)—reflecting on the lessons learned from various life-defining moments. Most of the stories fall under the three categories of hardship, humiliation and heartbreak. Each woman reflects on what brought her to the her life-changing moment and how things proceeded from there. Each essay ends with a brief “note to self” about the primary lessons they learned.

As with all books of this ilk, the essays are wildly uneven. Also, it becomes difficult not to “compare” the hardships and heartbreaks to each other. Is it really so awful to become “ugly” when someone else writes about seeing their mother shot dead by their father? Other times, you feel like the person was bringing the problem onto themselves a bit (as with the women who couldn’t leave cheating spouses). The other problem was that the short essay format forces each woman to condense their experiences—sometimes shortchanging the agony and difficulties they faced. (The essay on the woman whose young son died comes to mind.)

Despite these shortcomings, the book held my interest as the various obstacles faced vary wildly and satisfied the voyeur side of me. It is amazing what difficulties people can face and end up being stronger as a result. If this type of book is your “thing,” then I’d recommend it. Otherwise, I think it ended up being a weaker read than I was expecting and I was disappointed.

Adele Stratton says

A collection of 30 essays, all by women about their individual stories of “Hardship, Humiliation, Heartbreak” and overcoming it all. A few were insipid, especially a couple of the earlier ones. I almost quit halfway through, but seeing nothing but glowing reviews on Amazon, I pressed on and it did get a whole lot better. I was riveted by Rhonda Britten’s story and enjoyed very much those of Stacy Courtney and Kathy Najimy too. Sheryl Crow also contributed one that was so-so.

Leigh says

If you are looking for something similiar to Chicken Soup for the Soul, this might be just the ticket. However, if you've read one of the stories, you've read them all. Basically, somebody narrates about how they encountered personal and professional setbacks and overcame them and it all ends happily. I thought the book was okay but a bit monotonous.

Jen Liu says

It is a good concept in compiling personal stories of women and sharing the wisdom. Some of the stories are very moving and inspiring. However, the book seems to be more a random collection of articles and can be

edited to be more coherent to read.

Libscigrl says

While I get that we need a background story for what these women have "overcome", I don't need the details of the affairs and humiliating moments to see their path. Spare the drama, give me more of your journey. Stopped reading at page 74.

Suzanne says

Decent inspirational essays by various women. All are by women who are either famous or have made national headlines. I would have preferred more by ordinary women who are out of the spotlight - that would have resonated more with me. At times, it seemed a little too much of "I am famous, but I am just like you."

Dawn says

These are short essays written by women, some famous, some not so famous, about moments in their lives that were life changing. A few were well written, but many needed some editing. And I often didn't connect the actual "note to self" at the end of each piece to the story I'd just read. Maybe someone other than the essay author wrote the actual notes to self, I don't know.

Laura says

Lovely little book with nice, short chapters. I had high expectations that it never really lived up to. Favorite line was on pg. 299: "I believe that for the most part, soul-building comes when you have to go deep inside yourself and endure some silence." Also on page 308: "Do I move ahead or do I turn back? Do I settle back into the fear I know, the fear I've been carrying all my life, or do I move forward into an invigorating life of not knowing what's next?"

Judy says

This is a short book that can be read in a few hours. In fact, it's divided into 30 segments of only a few pages each, so it's perfect reading for short snatches of time (like perhaps when seated in a small room in your house). This book deals with the question, what defines us as women? Is it the rejections, crises, humiliations, or challenges we face in our lives, or is it our reactions to these obstacles? In this book, 30 women share the stories of the defining events in their lives and the lessons that they learned by going through the experiences. I enjoyed this book, but I won't be going around urging my friends to read it. But on the plus side, I realized with the first story that I have had a fairly ordinary life compared to these stories.

Lachelle Saieh says

I enjoyed this book a lot. All the different stories and all the trials and tribulations these women had to go through and survived just made me empowered that anything is possible. You just have to have the will to push through and become a better person because of the things you go through in life.

All of the stories touched me but one in particular cut to the core because the note at the end said "The worst thing that ever happened to you can be the best thing that ever happened to you if you only let it." This is a phrase I will cherish.

Overall, a great book. There were funny parts where I laughed and sad parts where I cried. All of these women went through great things to come out on the other end smarter, happier and better. It is definitely something I will think about the next time I'm faced with adversity.

Christine Chapman says

30 powerful stories of Heartbreak, Hardship, and Humiliation. The women tell their stories honestly exposing their raw emotion and devastation leaving the reader with one "note to self" at the end of each passage. Truly inspiring.

Carianne Carleo-Evangelist says

To be honest, read only Camryn Manheim, Maile Zambuto and Mariska Hargitay's chapters. Maile's was the reason I got the book after attending 2016 Joyful Revolution gala. Her strength amazes me. Was pleased to read the detailed story from Hargitay about the Dolphins. Manheim's was just heartbreaking in knowing even famous folk struggle like common ones. Great read

Anna Bendewald says

I laughed, I cried, and I laughed some more. What a beautiful book! I went on a journey with these women. So visceral and true...because they are true stories and WOW! Now I feel as though they are my stories forever. If you're a woman, a friend, a person... you'll enjoy Note to Self.

Lisa says

(Non-Fiction, Women's Lives) This book is a great collection of personal stories from women who overcame trials or loss in their lives and have become stronger. The fortitude these women exhibit will inspire and comfort. My favorites were Rita Hunt's recollection on the death of her 9-year-old son and Carol Leifer's sentimental story on the death of her gregarious father.

Annmarie says

When you get whiny read what others have gone through amazing. It will make you thankful.
