



Choosing Hope: Moving Forward from Life's Darkest Hours

Kaitlin Roig-DeBellis , Robin Gaby Fisher

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"[S]tirring...a bold, inspiring and ultimately hopeful book."

--Arianna Huffington, co-founder and editor-in-chief of *The Huffington Post* and author of the *New York Times* bestseller *Thrive*

Kaitlin Roig-Debellis is the first-grade teacher at Sandy Hook Elementary School who saved her entire class of fifteen six- and-seven-year-olds from the tragic events that took place on December 14, 2012, by piling them into a single-occupancy bathroom within her classroom, mere feet from the brutal and indiscriminate massacre taking place outside the door. Since then, despite the unimaginably painful experiences she endured, she has chosen to share her experience with others, in the hope that they too can find light in dark moments.

Choosing Hope is a lot of things. A written witness to a tragedy that will never be forgotten. A gripping firsthand testament to the power of good over the power of destruction. An inspirational memoir by a brave young woman whose story is one of courage, heroism, faith, and resilience. And a celebration of all the people who make the choice to pass along their hope and positivity to young ones—parents, mentors, and especially teachers. There is no moving on, but there is always moving forward. And how we move forward is a choice.

"[M]oving" -Wally Lamb, *New York Times* bestselling author of *We Are Water* and *She's Come Undone*

"[B]rave" -Karen Armstrong, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life* and *The History of God*

“Although now I have witnessed the worst of mankind, instead of feeling bitter or regretful I have chosen to embrace gratitude. I believe in the power of kindness, the influence of educators and mentors, faith and God, and most of all I believe in humanity. Bad things happen to all of us, things that test us and impact us and change us, but it is not those moments that define us. It is how we choose to react to them that does.” —Kaitlin Roig-DeBellis

From the Hardcover edition.

Choosing Hope: Moving Forward from Life's Darkest Hours Details

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From Reader Review Choosing Hope: Moving Forward from Life's Darkest Hours for online ebook

Kirsti says

A very positive book to have come from this tragedy. Kaitlin has a very good voice that translates well to the written word, and I felt really connected to both the story and the author. I first read a book review in one of the trash magazines that my mother in law always buys, and I was intrigued. I found the book to be informative, and yet still emotional. There was no real description of the awful events, at the author's request. Instead, it focuses on the healing and trying to find positive things in life when you think it can't get any worse. Five stars.

Ingrid says

This book seriously could have done without the first part. It just talks about her growing up, wanting to be a teacher, getting engaged, blah blah blah.... It came off as being really self-indulgent. Once the story of the shooting came in, the pace really picked up and it got more interesting. My only other complaint of the book was that it often felt cheesy, like every other story of overcoming adversity. If it wasn't about the Sandy Hook shooting, which already interests me, then I wouldn't have read it. Otherwise, in the parts of the book that told the story itself rather than just the lessons she learned, it was pretty interesting getting a "behind the scenes" look at the tragedy. I also had no idea of her charity or backlash until reading this. But speaking of the backlash, is it wrong that I agree with some of what her opposers at the school believed? She wanted to implement more security in her classroom to put the students minds at ease; wouldn't that ultimately have the opposite effect because it reinforces that danger could be near? Maybe she should have tried to see the other perspective.

Laura Parente says

I think this is the fastest I have ever read book! The chapter about that fateful day can be hard to read. She even suggests that some may want to skip it. What I thought was so great is her detailing how she came out through the darkness and was able to pick up the pieces of her life, one day at a time.

Nancy says

Tragic story....this book would be very meaningful for a fellow teacher to read as they would fully understand the whole student/teacher relationship.

Lauren W says

I found this story.... Odd. I remember hearing about it on the news and watching in shock at the tragedy that happened in that school. For a young teacher, it must have been a shocking ordeal to have to endure with

such young children. What got me is the way she speaks of herself. Throughout she says she's not trying to get herself noticed but instead trying to move forward however, the number of pages I've just read about her talking about how awesome she is... I'm not sure what the purpose 80% of the book was other than just to speak about how much of a great teacher she is. It was a quick read, I had to finish it but I'm not sure I'm inspired or overly interested in what she has to say - more saddened by the fact she's using these terrible circumstances to bring attention to herself. I may have misinterpreted it but you'll have to read it for yourself!

Dedra Montgomery says

Was not sure what expect from this book when I started it. I would recommend it to anyone. The author was a first grade teacher at Sandy Hook School the day the tragedy happened. While she does discuss what happened that day, most of the book is about how she was able to come back and make something positive out of her life after being in so much darkness immediately after the shooting. Basically the book is about looking at the positive side of things, no matter what you are going through. This book kept my attention and I finished it in one day.

April (Aprilius Maximus) says

I could relate to Kaitlin so much because teaching is also my passion, and this book hit me so hard. A truly moving and personal memoir, I definitely recommend it.

Around the Year in 52 Books Challenge Notes:

- 25. A book whose main character is in a profession that interests you

Teneal says

Beautiful message. Very inspirational.

Shawna says

I enjoyed Sue Klebold's audiobook on the aftermath of Columbine (which she wrote after 16 years of rumination and recovery) a couple of weeks ago, and thought this audiobook would compliment that perspective. I was leery at the outset, since it's only been three years since the shootings, and I don't believe the author has the maturity and perspective to write about the events yet.

This is going to sound terribly catty, but the sound of her voice grated on my nerves. The author read the book herself, and she sounded like a valley girl. It really would have been better had she let a pro narrate for her.

She starts off after some inspirational quotes, by saying, "you don't have to listen to section about that day." Are you kidding me? Do you think I picked up an audiobook about the Newtown shooting because I don't want to hear about the Newtown shooting? Then she proceeded to talk about how she met her husband and

how he proposed, and I just couldn't take it anymore. I'm not watching an episode of "Say Yes to the Dress," I want to know about how you coped with a horrific tragedy. How much filler until we get to the point of the story? At that point I gave up and moved on. Life's too short, right Kaitlin?

Sharon says

It was actually a little boring and repetitive. Not the parts about the tragedy of Sandy Hook Elementary, but some of the stuff just about her life in general. I tried listening to it on CD and I couldn't get through it. The author read it aloud and she very strangely over enunciated words or certain syllables. It was so odd. So, I read it instead, but other than the sections specifically about the school, I ended up skimming it, because it wasn't that interesting. (Not that anyone would find my life story that riveting either.) As far as the story goes, it's too bad that she was not able to stay with her class after the tragedy. I was unaware of that and of all of the backlash this teacher received, but it seems like a big part of her choosing to write her story is to get her side of it out there and offer a rebuttal to apparently disparaging rumors about her supposedly abandoning her class.

Clare Bird says

Overall I felt like this book was "me, me, me." All about her life and very little to do with the Sandy Hook Shooting.... which is fine, but wasn't what the reader was expecting, in my opinion. It did have a good message, to choose hope.

Lenisa Jones says

One of the scariest things that can ever happen to a teacher happened to her. She saved an entire classroom of students in Sandy Hook that day and I think that makes her a true hero.

Elizabeth says

This is an amazing read by a woman who survived the Sandy Hook shooting in December 2012. Roig-DeBellis is the teacher who hid her students in the restroom attached to her classroom. She showed exceptional bravery and I applaud her for that. Roig-DeBellis' truly demonstrates that you can survive a horrific event and still make positive change in the world. As you can see from the first paragraph, Roig-DeBellis opened a nonprofit to help teachers who need help purchasing items for their classrooms. This started as a result of the Sandy Hook shooting because her classroom received more donations than they needed. Roig-DeBellis conversed with her students and came up with the idea. It's really great that something positive happened as a result of the Sandy Hook shooting.

There are a few things that disturb me about this book. First, once students returned to class they were sent to a different elementary school so they wouldn't be returning to the scene of the shooting. Roig-DeBellis' new classroom did not have an attached restroom and she was scared about where to hide in case there was

another shooting. She addressed the issue with her Principal and Superintendent on numerous occasions. They disregarded her, stating that the elementary school was safer now with police protection. The children were obviously still scared about it but that did not change the Principal or Superintendent's opinion. Roig-DeBellis continued debating the issue until she was placed on leave. The Principal or Superintendent should have listened to Roig-DeBellis' concerns to help the children feel safer. It is clear that out of the three of them, Roig-DeBellis was the only one who truly cared about the safety of her children.

Roig-DeBellis also tells a little bit about her personal life in the beginning, as well as the entire story of that fateful day in December 2012. This is a powerful story and I highly recommend everyone to read it

Crystal says

Wonderful book about overcoming the worst and deciding to live life to the fullest.

John Kaufmann says

I really liked the main part of this book. The author was a first grade teacher who survived the mass-shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School by hiding her entire class in a toilet closet in her classroom. The book provides a very moving description of the experience itself, as well as the shock/PTSD she experienced afterwards. Eventually she came to realize she could let the tragedy crush her, or she could begin to move forward through hope and love - through the power of giving. These sections of the book were very moving.

The first third of the book was background. It was interesting enough reading, and some background is necessary to set the context and give us a glimpse of her character. But I thought it went on too long, almost to the point of quitting the book. But once she got into the tragedy and aftermath, it was hard to put down. It petered out a little at the end as she started talking about the Classes 4 Classes organization she eventually founded for classrooms and teachers around the country to give to other classrooms and teacher. I thought it smacked too much of giving of material things, and of being an exchange where people can list their needs (which smacks of taking, not giving). Overall, though, a very good book.
