



Remembering Judith

Ruth Joseph

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Tells a tale of a child growing up with an anorexic mother.

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Theresa says

I didn't realize anorexia was such a long, slow process. And I guess I never thought about what a truly disgusting disease it is. But there was so much more going on in the household. I almost didn't know what was worse, living with her mother's illness or the way Ruth's parents treated her. Maybe if it happened now, at least there would have been some hope on some level for Judith. But proper treatment and understanding and therapy just wasn't there for her. As for Ruth, the fact that she made it through adolescence as well as she did is remarkable. She is a strong woman and one who should be proud of herself and the life she's achieved.

J. A. Lewis says

I applaud Ms. Joseph for writing this Memoir about the traumas of living with an Anorexic mother and mentally abusive father. I was horrified that no one helped this poor girl during her young and informative years. The constant neglect from both of her parents is really hard to read and I grew angry myself that these two people were allowed to inflict their issues on their helpless child. The lack of even buying basic necessities for their daughter as she outgrew her clothing was more than appalling. Yes, there is some repetitiveness in this book, particularly about food dishes and preparation and the constant illness of her mother. Nonetheless, the pain and neglect of this woman's childhood comes through loud and clear. I can only hope and pray that Ruth has realized that she need not suffer any form of guilt about her mother's illness and her father's anger. She was a child and not accountable.

Ellie says

Remembering Judith by Ruth Joseph is the excruciating history of the author's relationship with her mother, a woman who escaped the Nazi's as a child but lost her entire family as well as her homeland. Judith becomes a beautiful, accomplished woman-and an anorexic at a time when virtually nothing was known about it, even, for most doctors, its name. Ruth grows up to become by 13 the caretaker for a very ill mother she cannot (even now) be angry at. Her father is a harsh, withholding, abusive man who only shows love for his wife when she nears death but is unable to sustain any ongoing healthy relationship.

The book is very interesting but almost unremittingly painful, at least for most of it. The miracle is that Ruth survived, seemingly capable of loving relationships. It's the one light this book offers. That and the love Ruth has for her mother, no matter how ill, demanding, or selfish she becomes.

Joy says

So sad for Ruth and her poor Mom. With anorexia being well known and treated these days Ruth's Mom may have had a chance if it was recognized and treated in the 50s like it is today. God bless you Ruth , it took a lot of courage to write your story and a lot of love and patience to take such awesome care of your dear Mom. Thank you for sharing you and your Mom's story..

Sharon says

This book was very hard to read. I applaud Ruth for her courage to share very deep, painful experiences. Unless a person has ever experienced the level of mental & emotion abuse or have had a close relationship with a person struggling with an eating disorder...they may not understand the importance of this story.

Jane says

I'm sure this wasn't an easy book for the author to write, and I want to be somewhat sensitive to that. I think she did a good job of describing what it's like living with and caring for someone with anorexia nervosa, and in the process also conveyed a great deal about the culture within which she was raised--one radically different from what most of us have experienced. Still, for as much sympathy as I had for her, there were times when I wanted to shake the young adult version of her. (view spoiler)

Vicki says

Maybe I missed the point to this book, but I was hoping that the story would be more about Judith and her anorexia than about Ruth and her childhood.

With that said, I feel sorry for Ruth and the way she was treated as a child and young adult. Her mother and father seemed like extremely selfish people and didn't really care about her or her feelings. I'm glad that Ruth finally found the strength and courage to stand up to her parents and move in with her life.

Regan says

I don't know what to say about this book because it is not a great piece of literature by any means. It isn't even as much about Judith as it is Ruth her daughter. I thought I would learn more about Judith as the title would suggest. Even so, it was interesting and heartbreaking at the same time and with that said I would recommend it.

Jenn says

A harrowing true story of a girl growing up in Cardiff in the 50s and 60s with an anorexic/bulimic mother and a cold, withholding father. No one really knew anything about anorexia back then so the mother really wasn't treated, except for occasional hospital visits when she was too weak to stay at home. She had a few helpful sessions with a psychiatrist, but her husband was jealous of the doctor and made her discontinue the treatment. The author understands that she isn't getting what she needs from her parents, and yet loves them (particularly her mother). But she ends up having to be the mother to her mother, her mother's caretaker - as well as going to school and attempting to have some sort of social life. It's a thoughtful and well-written book.

Teresa says

At times this was an extremely difficult book to read....written by Ruth, the daughter of parents, who as children had each escaped death as German Jews just before the start of the war that would have in all likelihood seen them in concentration camps or worse. Her parents met in a boardinghouse in Britian and were married.

In the era of the 50's and 60's the disease of anorexia nervosa was virtually unheard of but Ruth spends her childhood and teenage years dealing with this very condition as it slowly but surely steals her mother from her. Her father escapes the turmoil by working on the road and leaving Ruth to deal with the problem and the pain. Her days and nights are filled with caring for her mother, trips to hospitals and clinics were her mother is treated just enough for those in charge to send her back home, never able to diagnose what is wrong with her.

As her mother wastes away Ruth gains weight. Her mother deals with her own gnawing physical hunger by having her daughter sit and eat dish after dish and describe the tastes and textures. As a traditional Jewish family, their entire family and religous life revolves around food. Ruth's obligations of taking care of her mother, school, and maintaining the "good face" of the family to the community allow her no time for anything else. She buries her pain and unhappiness by eating. Any attempts she makes to escape, even for a short time, are met with guilty accusations from both her mother and her father.

As an adult, even after all the years of watching her mother suffer and finally die, Ruth finds herself counting calories and paying homage to her scale. Will she be able to escape the fate of her beloved mother? Will she ever be able to make peace with her father who believes she brought on her mother's death by marrying and starting a family of her own? A haunting story.

Pirate says

The story was fascinating but Ruth Joseph could have been much more concise. I felt like I spent more time reading the same thing over and over towards the end, even though there were a few new developments.

Being a child of narcissist parents is difficult, so is having parents who are chronically ill. Joseph tells her story with compassion and insight, though I would have liked more details about her parents' and grandparents' history and their lives apart from eating/not eating and working/not working.

Hazel McHaffie says

A more unusual book about anorexia in that the 'patient' is the author's mother. Roles are reversed and dutiful Jewish daughter Ruth becomes principal caregiver to her difficult mother. Food plays a large part in their lives and this true story shows how it was used by different members of the family at different times to control and manipulate. Interesting insights into Jewish life as well.

Tara says

This is a sad story but an important message. Ruth Joseph is very brave. It must have hurt her a great deal to write about her experiences publicly but I bet her doing so will help someone, somewhere. It is unbelievable how cruel Ruth's own father was to her, and her mother's anorexia turned her (Judith) into an almost

unrecognizable creature. The Jewish culture kept Ruth bound by duty to her father for much longer than any person should have to endure such terrible treatment. I can't say I enjoyed reading this because it was sad and disturbing but I was fascinated by it and buoyed by Ruth's seeming triumph in becoming a caring, well-adjusted person against some pretty miserable odds. Definitely worth reading.

Christine Wright says

Wow

Very touching. Honest. Heart wrenching true story. Thank you for sharing your words and truth. Prayers for healing of this disease

Heather Hartsel says

Powerful

To read this was a challenge, the author drops the curtains from her hidden hell and bares her soul to the world.
