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## A Life Beyond Endurance By: Fay Grindrod (review)

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A Book Review

*A Life Beyond Endurance*

Written By: Fay Grindrod

Publisher: Barnes & Noble Print on Demand, 108 pages

Reviewed By: Dr. Susan Stuntzner, PhD, LPC, CRC, NCC, DCC, FAPA

Edited by: Joel Coltharp & Angela Stanley

A LIFE BEYOND ENDURANCE

### **A Life Beyond Endurance**

What is a reasonable amount of pain and suffering one can expect to endure in a lifetime? Can someone experience hardship and trauma, grow from it, and come out on the other side for the better? Can challenging experiences be used throughout one's life to help, heal, and nurture others having a difficult life or time (i.e., abuse, hunger, famine, lack of opportunities)? What life lessons can a person learn from traumatic and downright difficult life experiences? If a person wants to grow from his or her life experiences, how can this be done so the person can contribute to the world in such a way that s/he is leaving it a better place than when the person first entered it? Related is the notion and question of forgiveness. Can a person learn to forgive people who commit atrocious acts of injustice and harm towards others, particularly people who are innocent and do not deserve to be brutally beaten or murdered? Questions such as these are ones that people may ask themselves when they encounter and live through difficult, unfair, and often horrendous life experiences.

While most people face emotional pain, hurt, loss, and disappointment as a part of life (i.e., divorce, grief, loss of a loved one, disability), not *all* hurtful experiences and offenses are "equal," nor do all people move past them in a positive fashion and use their experience to help others. Similarly, some experiences are outside the normal range of those experienced by mainstream America. Examples may include traumatic wartime observations and personal experiences (i.e., the Holocaust, veterans serving in the Armed Forces, disability, and sexual abuse).

The author of this book is one such individual. Ms. Grindrod witnessed the Holocaust from an early age, saw and experienced the devastating effects of it firsthand. Grindrod opens the book with a synopsis of her time and experiences as a master's student in a guidance and counseling program. During this portion of her life, she is afforded an opportunity to explore and write about her own (a) personal and life development; (b) familial experiences growing up and those that occurred during the Holocaust; (c) testimonial witnessing to mass starvation amongst people she knew; and (d) stark observations of friends, loved ones, and strangers being brutally beaten, marched to prison camps, or murdered by German soldiers, just to name a few. Throughout this portion of the book

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she weaves stories and experiences into the fabric and landscape of the class assignment she was asked to complete. Personal insight and growth exercises are not uncommon in many counseling and psychology programs, as a key component instilled throughout is *to know and understand thyself*, for it is through this unearthing process that professionals can learn to truly know themselves so they can address and work through any buried pain. Another key component of insight exercises is helping professionals experience themselves, their life, and developmental experiences in such a way that they can move past them and, hopefully, become the type of professional who can assist others they encounter who are having a difficult time in life or in moving past some challenging trauma or situation.

Throughout the book, Grindrod shares 45 stories, poems, and excerpts from her life, as well as experiences, thoughts, and feelings she had. The author, now a woman in her mid-80s, is able to reflect on her life, experiences (pleasant and unpleasant), pain, triumphs, and life lessons and share them with the reader in an abbreviated but powerful manner. Integrated are a number of topics, which include: events, interpretations, and feelings associated with the Holocaust; stories of survival and learning to cope with difficult events and losses; important people and relationships throughout her life and the ways they positively influenced her; learning to develop a relationship with oneself and to trust who you are; finding meaning and purpose in the midst of difficult life events; motherhood; love; dealing with survivor's guilt; personal values, inner strength, and courage; the purpose and value of growing older; wisdom and self-nurturance; and insight to the meaning and pursuit of personal security.

Also of relevance and interest is Grindrod's ability to write one story or theme while covering multiple topics. It is not known if this was the author's intent, but it was a remarkable discovery. For example, in her story "What is the Significance of Being Alive?" the author is able to introduce topics such as courage, helping others, love, balance, fear, and beliefs about material possessions. Through her works, Grindrod also reminds the reader of the ways we are human and often feel vulnerable throughout life. In her story "Look Inward" the reader is provided with the opportunity to remember that when we go through difficult life events, we experience loss, hurt, and, perhaps, a sense of burden; however, we strive to find a way to move forward and through it. Oftentimes, as human beings, we feel alone and isolated, and our need to survive pushes us to "reach out" towards others, only to discover that a key part of healing is learning and refining our sense of endurance, inner strength, meaning, and courage.

Collectively, Grindrod's works have a lot to offer readers about life, values, discoveries, and insights into lessons learned when people live with, work through, and move past difficult, heart-wrenching, and even traumatic experiences. She reminds us that finding purpose and a "silver lining" is possible, but that this discovery often takes time and is not easy. Grindrod's current life choices and experiences are additional examples of ways she uses her past, personal experiences, and lessons learned to help and improve the lives of others. She also writes about her involvement with the Peace Corps, Cross-Cultural Solutions, and her trip to Tanzania. While there, she became involved in the support of a 12-year-old boy so that he could go to school and get an education. She also teaches teenagers survival skills, instills hope in the children for a better future, and helps them understand the importance of not giving up and striving for a better future. Because Grindrod knows the face and devastation of poverty, war, and

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related difficult life events, she is able to give context to the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of many children living in poverty and dealing with challenging life circumstances. For many of these children, she is a voice of wisdom, understanding, compassion, love, and hope—all essential ingredients for the betterment of other people's lives.