Coping with Physical Loss and Disability: A Workbook
Rick Ritter, MSW
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Reviewed by Christina Gonzalez, LMHC for Reader Views (5/06)

The author starts this very unique workbook with a compelling quote from Christopher Reeve, “So many of our dreams at first seem impossible, then they seem improbable, and then, when we summon the will, they soon become inevitable”. This book is a way to help those who have found their dreams become impossible, find new ways to restructure their life, their ways of thinking and their ways of being in order to find ways to help their dreams become inevitable.

This book is oriented towards those who have experienced some type of a physical loss, whether from a disability, accident or including serious, chronic illnesses and pain. His examples range from people who have suffered knee injuries to quadriplegics, to individuals who have undergone a mastectomy from breast cancer to debilitating illnesses like muscular dystrophy. I would see value for individuals with ANY chronic health condition benefiting enormously from this book.

The author suggests that individuals who use this book consult with at least three people in their lives with whom they can share the results of the exercises which is very wise. The author takes the reader through a series of written exercises and anecdotes through six main chapters: Past and Future, Self Care and Support, Dealing with Loss: Feelings and Beliefs, Understanding Disability, Transforming Circumstance, and The Ongoing Process of Loss and Recovery. Each of these remain only questions and words on paper until the reader takes these questions and looks into their lives and then shares them with another.

As a therapist I will be recommending this book to my clients who are struggling with any chronic health issues. I would love to use this workbook with my clients in their therapy as well as suggest they share the information obtained about themselves with others in their lives. The author includes some excellent exercises to help the reader determine what people in their lives might be supportive to this process of recovery from physical loss and/or any chronic health condition.
The appendices include some excellent resources regarding therapeutic techniques and alternatives, suggested reading for coping with loss and disability, films on issues related to physical loss and disability, guidelines for watching films, and a listing of organizations and other resources that can help individuals coping with loss and disability.

As the mother of a child with Cerebral Palsy and as a psychotherapist myself, I found this book to be highly valuable for people dealing with any type of physical loss. As I mentioned above, just buying the book will not do anything. Filling out the exercises will help, but will not make a huge change. Filling out the exercise, following the author on the journey that he is leading the reader on and sharing with those close to the reader will make a great deal of difference. Some of the exercises I found helpful for those suffering from debilitating mental or emotional illnesses and even less acute health conditions such as asthma or others. This book is highly recommended to any individual who has suffered a physical loss and is still struggling to find their dreams. It would make a great gift from a supportive loved one who is also willing to make a stand to be there with the reader as they go through these exercises, and it would make an excellent aid to an individual who is currently seeing a therapist. I would not recommend this to someone who just wants to do the exercises randomly, haphazardly or in order to just keep their answers to themselves and not share them with another.