

Therapists' by Day Book Review

My Year with Eleanor: A Memoir by Noelle Hancock



I recently attended a workshop on "Emotional Regulation and Psychopathology" conducted by Dr. Robert "Bob" Leahy who recommended this book. He was Noelle Hancock's therapist and she gives him credit in the book for his skill in working with her to overcome her fears and anxiety. In the workshop he suggested that suffering is inevitable in life and that hurt in relationships are universal. It is evident in their therapeutic work that Noelle was able to get more comfortable with a fuller range of emotions and accept that emotions change. In Latin "emotion" means "to move you out of."

I sit on the Board of Directors at the Eleanor Roosevelt Center and was delighted that the author used quotes of Eleanor's to inspire her year long journey. However Eleanor likely would have focused more on interpersonal discomforts, like pushing for Human Rights, not swimming with sharks or skydiving. Eleanor overcame so many obstacles including at one point being terrified of public speaking.

The book is a fairly easy read and interesting in following her journeys in facing her fears along the way.

- Dr. Michele Winchester-Vega, DSW, Newburgh, NY



The author of *My Year with Eleanor* lost her job and took this loss as an opportunity to challenge herself and her fears based on a quote she saw by Eleanor Roosevelt, "Do one thing each day that scares you." Prior to seeing this quote and deciding to literally accept this quote as a personal challenge she was depressed and uncertain about her future. I find often that losses in life (i.e. job, relationship, death, etc.) can be an opportunity to challenge oneself, grow, and learn about the world and one's capacities.

It can be a wonderful and terrifying experience to challenge yourself to face your fears whether they are swimming with sharks, trapeze school, or skydiving (as in the case of the author). In my work, I have witnessed people facing fears such as walking into a crowded room where you don't know anyone, working toward a long-held goal such as a GED, or at times something as seemingly simple as going through valued belongings. Whether these goals are met on the first attempt or the thirtieth the process of working and facing these fears allows people to grow stronger, trust themselves, and be proud of themselves.

I would recommend this book to anyone contemplating growth in this manner- it is an easy read, the main character is likeable, and we can gain an understanding that most of the limits that there are in life are self-imposed.

- Christine Schaeztl, LCSW, Garrison, NY



Noelle Hancock finds herself on the cusp of turning thirty, recently unemployed, single and uncertain about her future. In a coffee shop, while working on her resume, she sees a quotation from Eleanor Roosevelt, a challenge to 'Do one thing each day that scares you.' Thus begins a year long quest, inspired by the life of this great woman, the wife of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The author sets about literally to face a different fear each day of the year.

The adventures she sets for herself include: Trapeze school; swimming with sharks; skydiving; and most spectacularly, climbing Mount Kilimanjaro. All of these she accomplishes, along with many other smaller but still real fears that she faces. She is aided by an amazingly loyal and supportive group of friends and by her psychotherapist, "Dr. Bob." His insights and interpretations help her make sense of the experiences. One major task she sets herself is to end her reliance on medication to sleep. She had developed a dangerous habit which involved taking several pills a night and doctor-hopping to get more pills than legally allowed. Her plan to climb the highest peak in Africa was the impetus to kick this habit because she could not, for safety reasons, use the pills on the climb. It was inspiring to go with the author on this series of marvelous journeys, both inside her mind and in the outside world. This book highlights the fact that the mind is flexible and open to change and that friends along the way, even long gone ones like Eleanor Roosevelt, can provide the help needed to live a happier and more satisfying life. - *Jane Carey, LCSW-R*



At times, clients describe great disappointment in the lack of excitement or fun in their lives. Noelle Hancock hilariously described her journey from shamefully reflecting on her lackluster life to living courageously. She focused on exploring new and scary adventures inspired by a quote by Eleanor Roosevelt.

A similar thrill can be found in personal development growth, which occurs in counseling more frequently. Readers would benefit to the parallels in their personal lives, families, businesses and schools. Since, pilot school and trapeze walking may not be available to many of us.

Noelle Hancock and Eleanor Roosevelt inspire us to realize personal growth frequently proves to be far greater than the temporary fear holding many of us back. Eleanor Roosevelt's legacy inspired persistence despite obstacles to impact the lives of others. Noelle Hancock's memoir of her dedication to act despite anxiety and self-doubt aims to encourage readers to push past fears in all areas of life, especially fun. - *Elena Morales, LMHC, Monroe, NY*



I thoroughly enjoyed this book both personally and professionally. I appreciated the simplicity of her writing and found it an easy and engaging read. Noelle, through the inspiration of Eleanor Roosevelt and the support of her therapist, decided to go on a journey of personal growth. She used both her humor and courage to conquer tasks that she once would have considered unattainable. Anxiety can often be about control. If you don't control it, it will certainly control you. Instead of the latter, she decided to get her anxiety under control by stepping out of her comfort zone and taking on tasks that both challenged and scared her. Through this, she found her strength and ability to overcome. I often talk with my clients about the difficulty of change and I often say "it won't be easy, but it will be worth it." It is always easier to do what we have always done, but then we never see beyond who we currently are. When we are able to put ourselves in uncomfortable positions and find the coping strategies to deal with it, that is when we change. I especially appreciate her incorporation of mindfulness into her work. Mindfulness is a tremendously powerful and useful tool. I use it myself and with all my clients. Staying in the moment and focusing on the here and now is such an important skill. It allows us to remain more conscious of thoughts and our emotions. - *Victoria Sullivan, LCSW-R, Monroe, NY*