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I Choose To Be Happy: A School Shooting Survivor's Triumph Over Tragedy



Synopsis

ABC News journalist Diane Sawyer summarizes this book perfectly in one sentence: "Missy breaks your heart, puts it back together again, and makes you a believer - in forgiveness, faith, and how the strength of one girl can change the world." Missy Jenkins Smith was one of eight students in a prayer group randomly shot by 14-year-old Michael Carneal on Dec. 1, 1997, in the lobby of Heath High School in Paducah, Kentucky. Three girls were killed. Missy, a 15-year-old sophomore at the time, was paralyzed from the chest down. But Missy didn't see her disability as an end. Just hours after the tragedy, she forgave Carneal and took back her life. Over the subsequent 15 years, with no malice and a focus on her physical and mental rehabilitation, Missy would graduate from Heath, earn a bachelor's degree in social work from Murray State University, become a counselor for troubled youth at a day treatment center, get married and give birth to two healthy sons. Missy, now 32, has received numerous honors over the years for her determination and courage, including being named "Kentuckian of the Year" and one of *Ladies' Home Journal's* "Most Fascinating Women."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Grade 6 Up
•On December 1, 1997, 15-year-old Missy Jenkins was wounded by Michael Carneal at their high school in West Paducah, KY, in one of the first school shootings in the United States. She was instantly paralyzed from the chest down as she watched him kill three of her classmates and injure four more. This memoir explains the horrific events of that day and all the

difficult days that followed. The author's message is one of hope and forgiveness—she writes frequently of how important it was for her to forgive Michael and move forward with her life. She also talks extensively about living each day to the fullest and appreciating all that she has, regardless of her disability. Jenkins credits her faith in God in helping her to heal both physically and mentally. Her story is inspiring and compelling, but the entire chapter dedicated to Michael's interrogation by police seems a bit long. Small, black-and-white photos show the milestones in her life, including her high school graduation, her wedding, and her husband and young son. This would be an interesting book to pair up with a unit on conflict resolution or in a discussion of school violence and bullying.

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"Thank you, Missy, for showing us the healing qualities of forgiveness and real grace in the face of adversity." --Robin Meade, CNN Headline News anchor and author of N.Y. Times best seller *Morning Sunshine*!"Her determination, strength and bravery shine through this book, which offers valuable lessons to people of all ages." --Jim Abbott, former major league pitcher

"Missy's story of courage and forgiveness is one that every student and parent needs to hear and experience." --Renee Miller, principal of Junction Hill C-12 School, West Plains, Mo.

The Heath High School shootings happened on December 1, 1997, just one day before my 18th birthday. It seemed surreal and unfathomable. I've always wondered more about them and had the opportunity to hear Missy Jenkins Smith speak at a faculty assembly for my school district during the week of the 17th anniversary of the shootings. I honestly dreaded the assembly because I feared it would sad and I selfishly didn't want to end my week in tears. I could not have been more wrong. Missy's message of faith, forgiveness, making the best of our situations, and peace were amazing. She is so overwhelmingly positive and proves that God does have a plan for all of us and will always make good things come from bad situations. I highly recommend this book for anyone who works with children, parents, and young adults.

This an excellent book. I live in Paducah, Ky where this shooting took place so this really hits home to me. Definately this book was far better than I expected and i READ IT IN TWO DAYS something I never do. There are details in this book that I did not know before and also the interrogation of the shooter by the police is in the book also and I found this particularly interesting. Missy Jenkins is

truly an inspiration. Buy this book it is worth it and you will be intrigued, moved and inspired.

Missy was good friends with my son. When I first heard of the shooting I guess I detached myself because it wasn't at my children's school. The phone call from My Son came and brought it all home. We spent time at the hospital with Missy and her family but when she went to rehab I kind of lost track. This book answered a lot of my questions but more so it taught me what a beautiful person that little girl has become. Read this book. Really pay attention. Missy's message can be heard and practiced through so many aspects of anyone's lives. God bless you Missy and your family. I always said you were my HERO.....now I understand why.

Missy has done an excellent job of explaining what happened to her and how she has dealt with it, without being whiney or entitled. Her story is emotional, yet she doesn't go for the tear jerker. She seems to have sincerely forgiven the young man who shot her, but is realistic in her belief that he should be responsible for his actions. She is an inspiration, not only for her faith, but with her positive attitude.

I graduated from Heath High in May of 1997 and I remember exactly where I was and what I was doing on the day of the shooting. I was shocked and in disbelief. Missy is a very strong woman and is and should be an inspiration to those who are going through adversity. This book really puts it in perspective on how choosing to be happy after something like this can help the healing process. I would recommend this book to anyone and everyone!

A wonderful journey filled with tears and happiness. Missy has so much courage and strength and her resolve to help other people, especially young people, is priceless. The lessons I came away with from Missy's story has helped me to want to be a better person and to understand more about forgiveness in everyday life. It has made me want to choose to be happy!

I found this book to be very inspiring. I had heard about Missy from my cousin before I read this book. My cousin goes to Heath currently and said that the school will be closed after this year. Since I have read this book I have forgiven many people though none of them have hurt me like Michael hurt Missy.

Must read for everyone! Very personal, moving and touching story of forgiveness and triumph over

tragedy.

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