

Book Title: Becoming Anna: The Autobiography of a Sixteen-Year-Old

Author: Anna J. Michener

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Becoming Anna is an autobiography written by Anna Michener, a 16-year-old girl. Anna is actually called Tiffany throughout this book; she changed her name to Anna and took the last name of her adoptive parents when she went to live with them 2 weeks before her 16th birthday.

As I read, Anna describes the severe emotional and physical abuse she suffered throughout her childhood and early adolescent years. Anna was abused by her mother, father, grandmother, and by the staff members working at the mental institutions where she had lived from 13 to 15 years of age. Anna was institutionalized on the basis of what her mother and father told the psychiatrists/psychologists about her. Anna was diagnosed with clinical depression and a chemical brain imbalance, with no medical/psychological testing to back up these diagnoses. Anna was suffering from child abuse, nothing else.

When I was reading this book, I could feel the strong emotional feelings Anna still struggles with regarding the child abuse she experienced. I could feel the anger and confusion she experienced while writing this book. Anna writes from her heart. She pours out her soul on every page and speaks for all the victims of child abuse.

This book moved me emotionally and evoked angry feelings in me. The entire mental health system failed Anna and is still failing to improve the living/emotional environment of many mentally ill/abused children today. These children need a warm, nurturing, and compassionate environment that meets their needs. The staff members of the mental institutions described in this book were emotionally and physically abusive, and they lacked any concern for the well being of the patients. The staff enjoyed physically restraining patients and sending them to the isolation room for minor behavioral infractions. I was appalled by the sadistic and unethical actions of the staff members.

As I was reading this book, I kept hoping for an authority/adult figure to appear who would just listen to Anna and give her the support she desperately needed. I kept reflecting upon her situation and thinking of how nice it would be for someone to give her some well-deserved positive feedback. This never happened.

I highly recommend this book. I hope it touches you as it did me.