

VOICES OF TEENAGE TRANSPLANT SURVIVORS

Dr Sample documents her work at a transplant survivors' summer camp, coaxing poetry from teens who don't read it, but who have plenty to say about their "miracle-like" experiences post-transplant. She describes brave young people whose aching drive toward supervivere, (above + to live) bursts forth in striking poetic images and metaphors that blend the surreal with the mundane. The chapter "Our Scars, Our Selves" unpacks an atypical adolescent identity formation in simple terms. JD writes of dying and returning to life three times, concluding that "My time is now, and I am here." We can learn much about resilience from these teen-aged poets.

—Johanna Rian, PhD, Program Director, Dolores Jean Lavins Center for Humanities in Medicine, Mayo Clinic

The subtitle, "Miracle-Like," well captures the spirit and achievement of Susan Sample's Voices of Teenage Transplant Survivors. Sample presents poems written by adolescents participating in poetry workshops at the summer Youth Transplant Camp program near Salt Lake City. In a series of short chapters, she carries the reader into the workshop process, introducing many of the young poets and placing their work in context. One young man writes of his anger, "It makes me want to hit / something. That's better / than someone." A young woman with a liver transplant proudly affirms, "My scar is my scar. / It has personality. / It bubbles and dances when I laugh." These poems clearly illustrate the power of poetry to heal and the indomitable spirit of youth. Poems of insight, honesty, and wit you won't forget.

—Jack Coulehan, MD, Emeritus Professor of Family, Population, and Preventive Medicine and Senior Fellow of the Center for Medical Humanities, Compassionate Care, and Bioethics at Stony Brook University, USA

This book is essential reading for adolescents and young adults with chronic or terminal illness—and for their parents. The poems of young transplant survivors enable us to glimpse how it feels to live as though perpetually suspended, as if on borrowed time. Through her stories of these remarkable

young people, Dr. Sample weaves a tapestry that illuminates distinctive, intimate concerns about identity, body image, belonging, hope, survival and mortality. In the words of one chapter title, “Mark This Beautiful.”

—Kimberly R. Myers, MA, PhD, Professor of Humanities and Medicine, Penn State College of Medicine, USA

It is increasingly recognized internationally that poetry can play a major supportive role both for patients of all ages as well as for their responsible health professionals. This inspirational book curated by Professor Susan Sample adds to this important message, with its insights through poetry by teenagers into their lives before and after heart, kidney, and liver transplants. This book should interest communities around the world concerned with organ replacement, whether young or older patients or their families, or responsible health professional staff and students.

—Donald RJ Singer MD, FRCP, Hippocrates Initiative for Poetry and Medicine [hippocrates-poetry.org]

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Miracle-Like

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University of Utah, USA



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Malaysia – China

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

*To all of the YTK campers, past and present,
who have enriched my life beyond measure
and
to Pam whose support and friendship
made this project possible*

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First and foremost, my deepest appreciation goes to all of the teenagers who participated in the writing sessions at YTK. Although I have included poetry written only during the first 6 years of the project, everyone whom I cajoled into writing deserves my thanks and admiration. I continue to learn from and be inspired by these courageous individuals. I also extend my heartfelt appreciation to parents who generously gave me permission to include writing by teens who have since died. I tried over the past year to contact as many former campers, parents, and/or copyright holders of the poetry as possible. I invite those whom I was not able to reach by mail, email, or telephone to contact me.

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