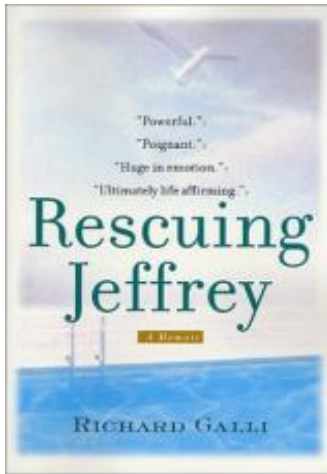


Rescuing Jeffrey: A Memoir

by Richard Galli



About the Book

On the 4th of July in 1998, teenager Jeffrey Galli dove into a friend's swimming pool and hit his head. His father Richard pulled him out and resuscitated him only to find that Jeffrey would be paralyzed from the neck down, be unable to breathe on his own, and be dependent on others for the rest of his life. With disarming honesty, Richard Galli confesses his determination to "rescue" Jeffrey again - this time by removing him from life support. In journal form, Galli emotionally records the progression of events entwined with the family's heartbreaking choice and the uplifting and life-affirming outcome of their decision.

Discussion Guide

1. An increasing number of memoirs -- many on disturbing and personal topics -- have appeared in recent years. Literary memoirs can serve as a powerful means of discussing universal themes through personal experience and Richard Galli's book has certainly been regarded as a "teaching tool" in terms of how to cope and deal with tragedy. Do you believe there are subjects too personal to put in a book - for example, how did you feel when Richard Galli was contemplating removing his son's life support? What is the value of using literary writing to explore such personal experiences?
2. Richard Galli's book has been heralded as an extremely honest and affecting book. How does he achieve such an emotional intensity? Is it through the language that he uses? His tone? The format of the book?
3. Throughout the book, Galli's tone is often humorous and ironic, even as he sits at the hospital waiting room; overall he seems quite rational and composed. Sentences like "I had brought my son back to life, and then I had to find a way to kill him," produce a certain shock value. How did this no-nonsense style affect your view of the situation? Did it make the whole situation more or less intense? Did you still feel emotionally attached to Galli during these scenes?
4. How did the chapter introductory paragraphs, which are composed of notes sent to the Galli family after the tragedy,

affect your reading of this book? Did it make their story more personal or universal?

5. Did you find that you followed Richard Galli's progression in the book as the story went on? In other words, did your opinion about "Option Two" (removing Jeffrey's life-support) shift along with Galli's own transformation?

6. As much as this book is about family tragedy, it is also a book about parenting. As Galli writes, he offers an intense contemplation on what makes life meaningful, and gives readers a written testimony of the depth of a parent's love for his child. Even though Jeffrey is unconscious for most of the book, Galli's relationship with his son is constantly shifting, not only in terms of Galli's decision about his son's life-support but also how he views Jeffrey. Did you notice this change in the way that Galli viewed his son? Discuss this progress.

7. Galli makes it very clear that the doctors' only focus was to keep Jeffrey alive. It seems natural that people faced with tragedy would prefer to take this more passive role and let the doctors make all the decisions. But Galli makes an interesting point when introducing "Option Two:" "This place, these people, they all have one thing on their minds: keep him alive? Just because people can do things for him, doesn't mean they have to do those things." What point is he making about the doctors' approach to Jeffrey's situation? Did you find Galli's choice to take a more "active role" in the decision-making process shocking?

8. This book is often described as ultimately life-affirming and uplifting. How does Galli manage to produce this effect even though, ultimately, his son still has an extremely difficult road ahead of him?

Author Bio

A litigation lawyer and former journalist, Richard Galli closed his law office and moved his practice home so he could better care for his son. Galli lives with his wife and two children in East Greenwich, Rhode Island. Jeffrey Galli is a student at University of Rhode Island.

Critical Praise

"Galli writes with fierce honesty...As he wrestles with his feelings, he offers an intense contemplation of what makes a life meaningful, and gives readers a written testimony of the depth of a parent's love for his child...In the end, Jeffrey himself finds the will to live, making this absorbing memoir both heartbreaking and life affirming. It is a clear example of how writing the stories of our lives can help us heal. "

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Publication Date: November 6, 2001

Genres: Nonfiction

Paperback: 216 pages

Publisher: St. Martin's Griffin

ISBN-10: 0312283407

ISBN-13: 9780312283407