



FREEDOM SEEKER

Revised Edition

Tiffani Harvey

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Reviews

“Suggestions in Freedom Seeker are good suggestions for EVERYONE.” Ken R.

“I wish every girl in high school could read these books. Women in shelters should read them. What a difference that would make!” Ellen

“Tiffani Harvey...has an innate strength driving her to question the automatic assumptions of authority which diminished her innate quest for independence and self-reliance in the name of ‘protecting’ herself from perceived threats... With grace, compassion, experience and solid practical advice...Tiffani reaches out to empower others by helping them to identify and answer the necessary questions and challenges at every stage of their walk to freedom, by casting a light on her own struggle while empowering individuals and the people who love and care for them with remarkable insight that can only arise from meeting personal challenges head on and succeeding!” A. R. Koheen

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Foreword

The reason for this book is to help people who want to make their own choices. The author writes about her own mistakes so readers can avoid making the same mistakes. She wants you to learn *how to* make your own choices. This book is meant to help others know what kind of questions they should ask before making choices. This book is written for:

People who have MH and Intellectual Disabilities

Family Members and
Professionals of People with Disabilities

Middle School and High School Students

Teachers and Counselors

Survivors of Violence

She wants to help people learn to ask questions and get answers before making big choices.

She wants to help people get as much independence as their health will allow.

She wants to help everyone save money and buy only what they can afford!

She asks you to read and understand everything you are asked to sign.

Acknowledgements

I need to start by thanking Mariaelena Wareham and her staff. It is from my experiences of watching them with their clients that I felt the need to write my story.

Next, I want to thank my parents, especially my mom, Judy Singer. She helped me remember a lot of what I wanted to share. We spent many hours on the phone, and she spent many hours proofreading my work! Thank you, Mom!

Then there's Eli Harvey. Eli started off as my prayer partner and neighbor who lived across the street. Eli has seen me through the best and worst of times. *He's still here! He's wonderful! I will love him always!*

I want to thank my good friends, Randall Luce and Carol Marie, who have been here for me from the beginning.

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(If you know someone who proofed this book and was not listed, let me know so I can add their name to the list. Thank you.)

I want to thank Pastor John and Sandy Repsold and Pastor Neil and Carol Anderson for their spiritual help the last 6-7 years of this journey.

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I would like to thank the seven people who took the time to be interviewed. These people wish to remain nameless.

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I want to thank Leona Gow for the many times she has saved me time and money.

Finally, I want to thank the Author of Life—the Lord!

Chapter 1

Practical Living: How to Make Everyday Choices (and Stick to Your Choices)

Introduction

As you read this, it is important to understand my view of life. Growing up, my dad and others told me I could not do things because I was disabled. As an adult, I got to make my own choices. Why? I had no guardian. I was able to make mistakes and learn from them.

Since 1992, I met people who have mental health issues who wanted to be as independent as I was. Since 1996, people who have intellectual disabilities have come up to me and said they wanted to do things that people without disabilities do such as get married or have a paper route.

While growing up, I worked hard to get others to let me make my own choices! I know a lot of adults who don't make their own choices. Some people who break the law are not allowed to make their own choices. I think adults should make their own choices. Other adults that don't make their own choices have a guardian or a power of attorney make big choices in their life.

In the following pages:

- First, I share my life.
- Second, I explain how I make my choices.
- Third, I write to the choice maker.
- Fourth, I write to the people assisting and communicating with the choice maker to meet their wants, goals and dreams in healthy ways.

I am a firm believer in:

- Health
- Prevention
- Taking Vitamins
- Eating Healthy
- Exercising
- Taking Prescription Medicine
- Choosing Your Own Doctor

I believe it's everyone's responsibility to be as healthy as they possibly can!

Being healthy includes avoiding:

- Drugs
- Alcohol
- Tobacco

Being healthy includes cutting back on:

- Salt
- Sugar
- Caffeine

I believe powers of attorney and guardians can be good for medical and health reasons. A guardian can deliver messages between the patient and the doctor.

Be Safe

I support the right of adults with disabilities to make their own choices and make their own mistakes. I believe it is important to keep an open mind.

If you are worried that what you are doing is unhealthy or dangerous, you should think about doing something else. If you speak extremely slow or if it is hard to understand what you say,

it might be best to have a power of attorney or a guardian. Why? People who can speak clearly and quickly can communicate your needs or wants *quickly*. To a doctor and other professionals, “Time is money!”

I chose to write this book after many people who have mental health issues and intellectual disabilities asked me how I got to do things that their guardian wouldn’t let them do. This includes:

- Getting married
- Going to college
- Handling their own money

I thought I could reach more people through my books instead of telling my story to one person at a time. I also thought people could go back and look something up if they didn’t remember what I wrote.

This is written from the point of view of the decision maker. If I don’t know about something, I ask others who do know. Some information is constantly changing, but the source is the same. So, you can look up the latest information.