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Catching Homelessness: A Nurse's Story Of Falling Through The Safety Net



Synopsis

At the beginning of the homelessness epidemic in the 1980s, Josephine Ensign was a young, white, Southern, Christian wife, mother, and nurse running a new medical clinic for the homeless in the heart of the South. Through her work and intense relationships with patients and co-workers, her worldview was shattered, and after losing her job, family, and house, she became homeless herself. She reconstructed her life with altered views on homelessness and on the health care system. In *Catching Homelessness*, Ensign reflects on how this work has changed her and how her work has changed through the experience of being homeless—providing a piercing look at the homelessness industry, nursing, and our country's health care safety net.

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Customer Reviews

The homelessness epidemic in the United States evokes many different reactions from people. What did they do to end up homeless? Why don't they just get a job? How can I help? Should I help? Could this ever happen to me? The answers to those questions are as varied as there are people to ask them. But one thing is clear, the number of homeless in our country is increasing. And we need to think more critically about how we, as individuals and as a society, respond to it. In *Catching Homelessness*, Josephine Ensign, a nurse practitioner, chronicles her work with the homeless. She discusses why she initially got involved, the people and issues she saw, and what she's learned about trying to help. She also talks, rather frankly, about her own period of homelessness. When she started working with the homeless, she was one of those who thought it could never happen to her. Her story and experience not only provide readers with a firsthand look

at helping the homeless, but also with the voice of someone who has been there. Both sides of the coin are reflected here. To say the subject is heavy would be an understatement. Not because this is a book that left me near tears on every page; it's not like that. But "heavy" just doesn't capture the rawness and reality of the stories contained in this book. Even if you're someone who works with the homeless or already has your eyes "open," I highly recommend picking up this book. It's honestly a quick read, but it's very powerful. I find myself still reflecting on it a few days after I finished it. And I expect I'll continue to think about it for some time to come...

"Catching Homelessness" was an excellent, quick read. I learned a tremendous amount about the homelessness epidemic both in factual and anecdotal ways. Most importantly, though, through reading Ensign's own story woven throughout, I realized just how precarious our lives can be and how quickly any of us could become homeless, even when we do everything "right" as she has. This is a beautifully written heartfelt memoir that adds an element of learning. Highly recommend it.

This book has lessons in life, history, geography, and of course, humanity. I was surprised at the ending, but in a good way. I would recommend this book to anyone with mixed feelings about people who are less stable in their lives and make judgements about the circumstances that befall some people through no fault of their own.

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