

Charting a New Course after Tragedy

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Christine Whitehead knows all about second chances. When she was barely seven years old, her parents died five months apart of unrelated causes, she found herself at the center of a bitter custody battle between her maternal grandparents -- Hungarian immigrants who lived close by -- and her paternal aunts, whom she knew only slightly. After months in limbo, she was finally court ordered to the home of her aunts, where she found a loving home, even though her uncle had a secret drinking problem that plagued the household.



Christine Whitehead

Having lived through those life changes, she battled -- and beat -- anorexia on her way to law school. Today, Christine is a divorce attorney and author of the book *Tell Me When It Hurts*,

(www.christinewhitehead.com.) "Although most divorce attorneys aren't known for it, I really see myself as a specialist in helping people find their second chances in life," Whitehead said. "I'm one of the few people who has actually seen a nasty custody battle from both sides -- first as a child, and now as an attorney and advocate for my clients. It's never pretty, but if people work hard enough, both the parents and the children can each find second chances waiting for them at the end of the process." Christine talks with Joyce about second chances, and will be taking calls from listeners.

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Whitehead's message for her clients, as well as readers of her novel -- which focuses on a trained covert operative who walks away from that life -- is that our choices define whether we ever get those second chances.

"In our lives, there is both darkness and light, and the choices we make on which one we embrace and which one we eschew helps determine if our course will be either self-destructive or redemptive," she added. "The irony is that sometimes, the things that seem to make us feel better in the short term are the things that are most likely to destroy us.

When I suffered from anorexia, there is a part of that behavior that was both compulsive and joyless, but it provided me -- in a weird way -- the only comfort or security I could experience at

the time. Helplessness in life isn't a circumstance. It's something we learn, and if we embrace it enough, it actually can mask itself as security, all the while it's killing us from inside."

Her experience as a child, and her struggles through her 20s and 30s, helped shape the way she practices law, Whitehead added.

"Daily, I see clients in the midst of divorce," she said. "Their fear of the possible losses ahead — the loss of their children, of their money, of their homes, of their identities — is palpable. Still, their biggest fear is that love has left them and may never return. They too are seeking that traction, that 'something' that will block the skid. To see most of them emerge with renewed hope, with different dreams, and with a fresh path is inspiring and sustaining. And it can show others in the same circumstances that second chances do exist -- if we have the strength and the smarts to cultivate them."

Christine has been practicing law for 25 years, and she has incorporated her love of horses and her own search for serenity and attachment into her first novel, *Tell Me When It Hurts*. She lives on a farm in Andover, Connecticut. You can purchase *Tell me when it Hurts* from Amazon.com by [clicking here](#).