

O'Sullivan, P. and Joyce, G. (2015). Breaking Away: A Harrowing True Story of Resilience, Courage and Triumph. Toronto: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd.

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The author, a former NHL player, writes a first-hand account of childhood abuse. In the world of sport, competition is so fierce that parents tend to drive children to the brink of physical and emotional breakdowns. Parents that are especially prone to failure in life have a habit of living through their children, like a second chance at life. Patrick O'Sullivan's father exhibits all these behaviours but takes it to another level. The strain on Patrick's life consumes him and drives a wedge between himself and his family. The book ties together specific events that culminated in a distorted, helpless child. Once grown up, Patrick realizes the significance of all that he has been through and decides to share it with the world, as an approach to healing.

Patrick O'Sullivan divides the book into a series of events spanning his childhood hockey days. To capture audiences, he begins with the most tragic event that changed his life, breaking away from his family. Each subsequent chapter builds momentum to the ultimate showdown with Patrick's father. For the book to sound sincere, the author builds an image of his father, John, as having failed at life, especially at hockey. By portraying the father as desperate, the readers begin to understand the lengths that John takes to get Patrick ready for the professional hockey world. Throughout the book, John moves from a desperate hockey wash-out to a man obsessed with redemption. Armed with a talented child, the father exerts all his power over Patrick just to see him succeed by John's standards. John's behaviour causes the family to collapse and break his son emotionally.

Patrick, having never experienced a comforting family life, grows up estranged from the

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world around him. Cut off from socializing or caring for others, he does not realize how detrimental his childhood trauma would scar his life. With a seemingly docile spectatorship surrounding Patrick and his father, Patrick grew up helpless and accepted his father's abuse. The book details how coaches, from across Patrick's childhood, would notice the abuse but stop short of intervening. Patrick was alone in his battle for freedom, which turned him into a very insecure person. Even with a new partner in his life, Patrick did not know how to accommodate her emotionally. His childhood isolation hindered his maturity as an adult. To this day, Patrick must seek psychiatric help to express his thoughts and emotions properly.

A child with exceptional talent should be nurtured and supported by his family and peers. Only then will that child appreciate themselves and the value they bring to the world. Patrick O'Sullivan grew up with NHL superstars that came from loving, supportive parents. These child prodigies were brought up under strict conditions but always had a strong family structure to fall back on. Patrick's family was so dysfunctional that he used his athletic ability to escape his family life. However, by the time he got to the NHL, the damage was done. Patrick was emotionally damaged to the point where he would fall into depression with every loss his team endured. His team failures became his personal ones because his father conditioned him that way. Even though Patrick had enormous success growing up playing hockey, his emotional dysfunction got the better of him when he turned pro. Without a nurturing background that families are supposed to provide, Patrick took on the world by himself and it eventually defeated him professionally. Patrick's wife came into his life too late but now provides the much-needed emotional support that keeps Patrick grounded.

The book describes a journey that a boy takes from being abused and isolated to being free and surrounded by a supportive family. As a child growing up a slave to his father's

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ambition, Patrick required an emotional backing that would allow him to persevere. A lack of dutiful parenting caused this child to develop a forced sense of ownership of his life. His coping mechanism was to detach himself emotionally from his family. Patrick did this so well he became deranged at the thought of slighting his father. This set the tone for the rest of his life because Patrick defines himself as a tough, self-motivating individual. Patrick's emotional detachment from his peers could have turned out more frightful if he had not met a stable, supportive partner. Only a person from a loving family would be able to show Patrick what that world looks like. Patrick mentions he is one of the lucky ones to have his life stabilize. Many people that suffer childhood trauma never experience a normal life. Patrick is also unique because he can afford treatment. He has enough resources to choose his own path in life. This is the story of someone who beat the odds and became an elite hockey player. It is more of an inspirational tale than a guide to overcoming childhood trauma. So, the book has limitations on applicability, however, the effects of childhood abuse can never be cured with money or treatment.

The book reveals how family socialization practices shape a child's view of the world. Socialization techniques that families use on children define who they associate with throughout the children's lives. Patrick was isolated to the hockey world and only associates with a close group of friends, that are in hockey. His wife was the daughter of the owner of one of his teams. Patrick understands this and is cautious about immersing his children in sports. He is also afraid that his father's influence on him will show on the public stage, but interestingly he takes an introspective look at how he will treat other abusive parents. To be an advocate against child abuse is admirable but to draw the line where parents are being abusive or just disciplinary is difficult. Coaches that witnessed Patrick and his father over the years testified that this dilemma

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held them back from acting.

This book is an extreme example of neglectful parenting. One that I hope parents take to heart when deciding what is best for their children. Parents may still think that despite his father's behaviour Patrick achieved his dream, playing professional hockey, but at what cost? A child's mental health is susceptible to abuse, especially in an intimate family environment. Thinking that children can grow out of anything is a fallacy that parents use to justify their actions. Patrick is just one case of how parents can easily destroy a child mentally before they have a chance to define themselves as an individual. This book is a cautionary tale that would benefit children, parents, and coaches in the sports' world. It would help child psychiatrists, psychologists or any field related to mental health. This book applies to many areas of study including: philosophy, psychiatry, sociology, management, and family studies. Of course, this book applies to parents and children of all ages no matter their involvement in sports. The underlying message to parents is: to accept children for who they are and cultivate their spirit with love.

The book calls for action against childhood trauma but leaves the reader wanting closure. If the story ended with Patrick explaining his parenting choices and values as an adult, the reader would fully appreciate the redemption process. Patrick tries to let readers know that he has a new lease on life but falls short of articulating it. Perhaps he has not reached that stage yet or is afraid of describing a prescriptive approach as a parent who underwent childhood trauma, after all the author is no expert. The story was a riveting tale of suffering and tragedy but also perseverance and redemption. It hooks the reader from the beginning and forces them to relive a horrific childhood. It is a powerful first-hand account of a child in need.