

## The Blind Girl Sees: Seeing Through the Heart and Not the Eyes

**Amber Needham**

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*Part memoir, part self-help text, The Blind Girl Sees draws lessons from living with blindness, showing others how to learn from their own obstacles, too.*

Amber Needham became blind when she was fifty years old. A stem cell transplant resulted in regained vision, but she lost her sight again following an accident. *The Blind Girl Sees* is her compelling and optimistic memoir—full of advice for rising above one's circumstances and finding one's true purpose.

Drawing on a childhood marked by turmoil and emotional abuse, as well as on her challenges in adulthood, this book looks back on the events that had initial negative impacts Needham's life. It mines these experiences for lessons, which are then used to encourage others toward strength, and toward living without fear. Concepts that are deemed integral to personal growth, including forgiveness and gratitude, are also examined in depth.

Needham establishes a love versus fear dichotomy throughout, suggesting that where one lands on that spectrum determines their access to happiness. She asserts that choosing love made a significant difference in her own life, too, and directs questions to her audience to help them make the same choice.

In service of its inspirational aims, though, the book forgoes a linear narration in favor of summaries of Needham's life events. Its anecdotes are variously painful and amusing, but all are used to illustrate the struggles of living with vision impairment—and of growing as a result of blindness. Needham covers each emotion that she experienced because of being blind in stark, sensible terms; this straightforwardness shifts when the book is delivering advice, where it becomes more optimistic and upbeat. In its self-help portions, the book's word choices are colloquial, and it addresses its audience in a direct, conversational manner.

But the book undermines itself by mentioning scientific studies without providing sources. These studies are said to prove some of its claims, but the lack of citations weakens this argument. Further, the book deviates from its central work to include materials like letters written to Needham's late family members who caused her pain, and to a former partner of hers that did the same. These letters are more detailed than the book's previous anecdotes, resulting in intimacy that's lacking elsewhere. Such variety is not reconciled until the book's end, which recapitulates the points made throughout it in summary form, tying the disparate pieces together.

Part memoir, part self-help text, *The Blind Girl Sees* draws lessons from living with blindness, showing others how to learn from their own obstacles, too.

CAROLINA CIUCCI (July 9, 2022)

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