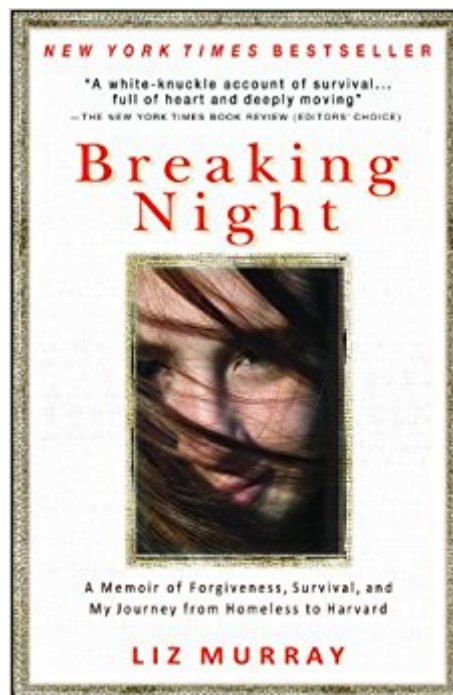




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# **Breaking Night: A Memoir Of Forgiveness, Survival, And My Journey From Homeless To Harvard**



## Synopsis

Breaking night: (Urban slang) staying up through the night, until the sun rises  
Breaking Night is the stunning memoir of a young woman who at age fifteen was living on the streets, and who eventually made it into Harvard. Liz Murray was born to loving but drug-addicted parents in the Bronx. In school she was taunted for her dirty clothing and lice-infested hair, eventually skipping so many classes that she was put into a girls' home. At age fifteen, Liz found herself on the streets when her family finally unraveled. She learned to scrape by, foraging for food and riding subways all night to have a warm place to sleep. When Liz's mother died of AIDS, she decided to take control of her own destiny and go back to high school, often completing her assignments in the hallways and subway stations where she slept. Liz squeezed four years of high school into two, while homeless; won a New York Times scholarship; and made it into the Ivy League. Breaking Night is an unforgettable and beautifully written story of one young woman's indomitable spirit to survive and prevail, against all odds.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. From runaway to Harvard student, Murray tells an engaging, powerfully motivational story about turning her life around after growing up the neglected child of drug addicts. When Murray was born in 1980, her former beatnik father was in jail for illegally trafficking in prescription painkillers, and her mother, a cokehead since age 13, had just barely missed losing

custody of their year-old daughter, Lisa. Murray and her sister grew up in a Bronx apartment that gradually went to seed, living off government programs and whatever was left after the parents indulged their drug binges; Murray writes that drugs were the "wrecking ball" that destroyed her family-- prompting her mother's frequent institutionalization for drug-induced mental illness and leading to her parents inviting in sexual molesters. By age 15, with the help of her best friend Sam and an elusive hustler, Carlos, she took permanently to the streets, relying on friends, sadly, for shelter. With the death of her mother, her runaway world came to an end, and she began her step-by-step plan to attend an alternative high school, which eventually led to a New York Times scholarship and acceptance to Harvard. In this incredible story of true grit, Murray went from feeling like "the world was filled with people who were repulsed by me" to learning to receive the bountiful generosity of strangers who truly cared. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

While reading Murray's memoir, you can't help but continuously wonder how the young woman narrated on the page could be the same woman who survived to become her author. In the harrowing tale of her childhood in the Bronx, Murray's straightforward and no-frills prose hits hard. These are the facts, and they are not pretty: Murray watched her parents mainline cocaine at the kitchen table from before she could speak, and the family often spent 25 days a month the time after her parents blew the welfare check to feed their blazing drug habit--starving. Regarding her parents' addiction with the utmost benevolence, Murray tells of bearing the weighty burden of young protector to her obviously flailing parents, and eventually living on the streets when it was less unhappy and perhaps safer than staying at home. With no resources to speak of, she ultimately commits to high school and finds her prospects can be great. Neither sensationalizing nor soliciting pity, Murray's generous account of and caring attitude toward her past are not only uplifting, but also a fascinating lesson in the value of dedication. --Annie Bostrom --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Breaking Night is a memoir about a young girl's plight to survive her parents' drug addiction, hunger, and homelessness. Liz starts by giving background into her parents' young lives and how they met, and consequently what life was like when her and her sister, Lisa, were young children. Her parents' partying turned into a terrible drug addiction that had them spending all of their welfare money getting high rather than feeding their two young girls. We learn about how as a young child, you

don't understand how very wrong your parents are when they spend the majority of the welfare check that comes at the beginning of the month on cocaine and only \$30 on food for the month. We learn how a young girl loves her parents and truly believes they love her as well, despite their drug addiction. As the reader, you do believe that her parents love her; however, it is hard to reconcile how they let their addiction consume them in such a way that has their two young girls asking neighbors for food and eating toothpaste for dinner to satisfy their hunger pains. Her parents' neglect of her needs leads to her truancy at school as a teenager, which later lands Liz in a girls' home and ultimately down the road, homeless. Liz takes us through her adventures of homelessness, her mother's death from AIDS, and how she finally finds the will to live a better life. She shows us through her story that people can be good and helpful (however, in her story those people do not include employees of the "system"), and that because of those people and her desire to want more in life, she is able to overcome the unthinkable. Liz is a resilient girl who overcomes a lot of emotional devastation and poverty to accomplish a brilliant education. She is forgiving, inspiring, and brave. A truly inspirational read for anyone going through obstacles in life which includes most of us!

This book is one that I highly recommend. This book covers a lot of heavy topics such as drugs, abuse, and poverty. This teen drama filled book is about a young girl named Elizabeth who grows up in the projects and both of her parents are on drugs. In this story Elizabeth has a choice to become successful despite her upbringing or is she going to fall in the pattern of her parents. I would suggest this book to teens because it covers a lot of heavy topics. You will need to be mature to truly understand the meaning of the book. If you're comfortable reading books by Sharon Draper, who has the same writing style when it comes to these topics, you should be able to read this very intriguing and heartfelt book. The reason why I compared this book to Sharon Draper's book is because, books like *Tears of a Tiger* has the same theme. In this book a young boy comes from a dysfunctional family and throughout this book he is trying to find ways to cope with it. In conclusion, I definitely think this book is a must read. It's a very humbling and inspiring book to all

*Breaking Night* is a book about bravery and about consequence and about personal dreams and hopes that each independently can change a person's life - Liz Murray writes and lives about how each of these things (and many more characteristics) can change the lives of many. There is a special sense of strength that Ms. Murray defines when recalling her developmental years living in

NYC with her parents and sister. Caring for her mother and worrying about her father and sister help define a fundamental goodness and kindness in her that continues to develop throughout her life. Never does she present a "poor me" attitude about her lot in life - rather, she displays with genuineness her love for her parents, sister, friends, teachers and other supports while learning to believe in herself - ultimately that helps to propel her from being a ward of the county and from being truly homeless to setting and then achieving real, life-changing goals. Liz Murray writes openly about her life - complete with her thoughts and with her feelings - no matter how difficult those thoughts and feelings might be to understand or accept. I have used Liz's story in the college classes I instruct and as inspiring reading/lessons for those I work with as a trauma-informed psychotherapist - Liz gives hope to those who might need it the most. Liz gives hope to all who know her and her story.

I heard this amazing lady speak at my beginning of the school year convocation in the fall. She talked about her Lifetime movie "From Homeless to Harvard", but since I can't stand those movies, I looked up and successfully found this book about Liz Murray. Her life was just as amazing as she was a speaker. Prepare to be inspired.

Much like "The Glass House" (Jeannette Walls) and "Coming Clean" (Kimberly Rae Miller), "Breaking Night: A Memoir of Forgiveness, Survival, and My Journey from Homeless to Harvard" is a horrific, but incredibly inspiring, true story of how one little girl is emotionally and then physically abandoned by her parents and yet somehow grows up functional--so functional she goes to Harvard. Liz Murray spent more time cutting school than attending classes, doing all she could to get her drug-addicted mother to pay attention to her, surviving without a working shower/bathtub and stealing clothes and food because the family's money was spent on drugs and booze. And somehow social services never intervened until she was 13--even though many of those in authority knew what was going on in the house. I am so impressed with Liz Murray's fortitude and gumption. It would have been so easy to repeat her mother's story; instead, she created her own and it is a truly astounding one. Homeless from the age of 15, she managed to go back to school, graduate, win a New York Times scholarship and go to Harvard. Reading this book will make you both cry and laugh and feel both ashamed and encouraged--but most of all, it will give you hope. We humans are tough cookies!

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