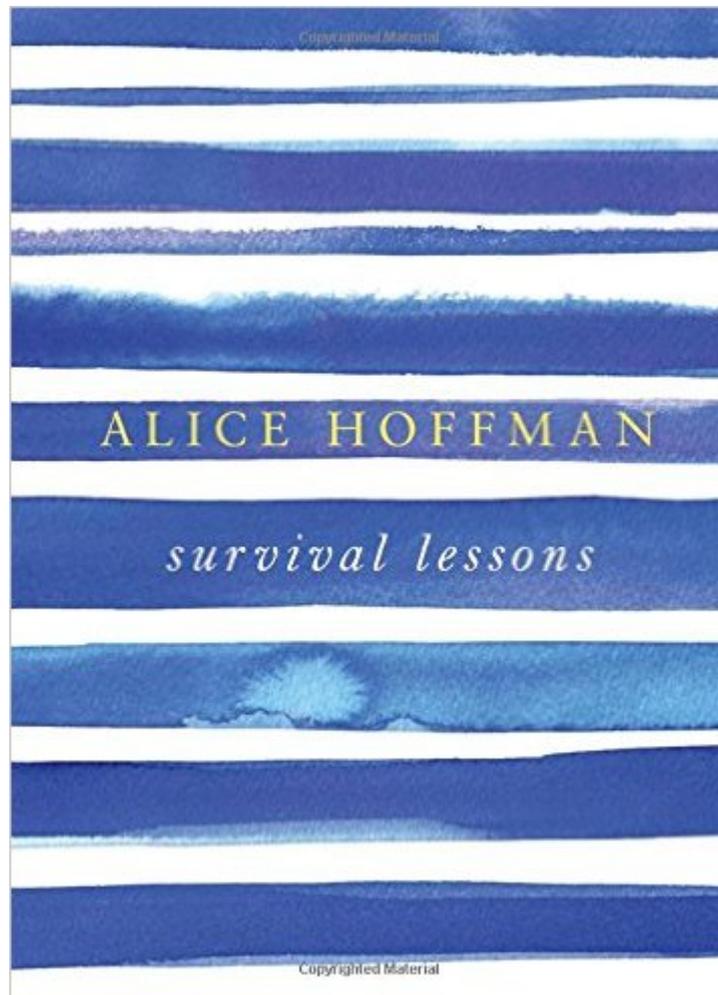


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# Survival Lessons



## Synopsis

One of America's most beloved writers shares her suggestions for finding beauty in the world even during the toughest times. *Survival Lessons* provides a road map of how to reclaim your life from this day forward, with ways to reenvision everythingâ€”from relationships with friends and family to the way you see yourself. As Alice Hoffman says, "In many ways I wrote *Survival Lessons* to remind myself of the beauty of life, something that's all too easy to overlook during the crisis of illness or loss. I forgot that our lives are made up of equal parts of sorrow and joy, and that it is impossible to have one without the other. I wrote to remind myself that despite everything that was happening to me, there were still choices I could make." Wise, gentle, and wry, Alice Hoffman teaches all of us how to choose what matters most.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 96 pages

Publisher: Algonquin Books; 1 edition (October 1, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1616203145

ISBN-13: 978-1616203146

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.5 x 7.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 7.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (142 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #318,885 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #104 in [Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Diseases & Physical Ailments > Cancer > Breast Cancer](#) #1601 in [Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Women's Health](#) #1814 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Arts & Literature > Authors](#)

## Customer Reviews

You may think you know who Alice Hoffman is. You've been reading her novels for years, from *Practical Magic* to *The Dovekeepers*. She writes women's literary fiction, right? After 23 such novels, it seems like a fair assumption. But did you know she's a popular young adult author as well? Or that she penned a nonfiction book, a memoir? Until recently, I didn't either, and I'm glad to have discovered some new Alice Hoffman titles to add to my reading list. Hoffman's latest book is called *Survival Lessons*, and it's a heartfelt entry into the world of nonfiction, a personal journey made universal. Fifteen years ago, Hoffman received a breast cancer diagnosis that sent her reeling. Treatment and recovery proved completely foreign landscapes, with few familiar landmarks

to direct her way. Hoffman wanted a guidebook, but found none. Now, all these years later, she has written the very book she wished for. "There is a very thin line that separates readers and writers," writes Hoffman in her introduction. "You make a leap over that line when there's a book you want to read and you can't find it and you have to write it yourself." The result is not a typical memoir, and in fact contains surprisingly few glimpses into Hoffman's actual ordeal. Instead, it's more of an optimistic instruction manual explaining how to take care of yourself when you're dealing with a serious illness, or any traumatic experience. Hoffman's advice seems simple on the surface. Choose your heroes, she says. Eat chocolate. Only answer the phone when you want to. Read more closely, though, and you'll see the unique interpersonal observations you've come to expect from Hoffman.

Alice Hoffman's "Survival Lessons" is a collection of brief essays in which the celebrated author discusses how she has successfully coped with various types of adversity, including a serious illness (she is a breast cancer survivor). She admits to such feel-good strategies as, on occasion, indulging herself in unhealthful foods and weepy old movies. In addition, she tries to let go of long-held grudges and pointless guilt; regularly enjoys the beauty of a garden, a child's smile, or a piece of beloved music; chooses her friends carefully; and emulates people who "don't give up, even when the going gets rough, even when they want to." One of her heroes is her Russian-born grandmother, Lillie, who lost both a husband and child, traveled to the United States, lived in a Lower East Side tenement, worked tirelessly in a shop on Jerome Avenue in the Bronx, and "volunteered at an old-age home into her eighties." Hoffman's words of wisdom are far from unique. Many men and women, some famous and others less well-known, suggest ways to spend time more productively. One recent example is "The Gift of Adversity," by psychiatrist Norman E. Rosenthal, who offers lessons that he learned from his childhood in South Africa, his long career as a respected physician, and his role as a husband and father. "Survival Lessons" is attractively bound and has lovely and evocative illustrations. Hoffman touches us with heartfelt guidance that should provide hope, consolation, and encouragement to men and women facing formidable challenges. Since "Survival Lessons" is concise (under one hundred pages) and not inexpensive, who would be its ideal audience?

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