



# The Big Fix: Hope After Heroin

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## **The Big Fix: Hope After Heroin** Tracey Helton Mitchell

After surviving nearly a decade of heroin abuse and hard living on the streets of San Francisco's Tenderloin District, Tracey Helton Mitchell decided to get clean for good.

With raw honesty and a poignant perspective on life that only comes from starting at rock bottom, *The Big Fix* tells her story of transformation from homeless heroin addict to stable mother of three and the hard work and hard lessons that got her there. Rather than dwelling on the pain of addiction, Tracey focuses on her journey of recovery and rebuilding her life, while exposing the failings of the American rehab system and laying out a path for change. Starting with the first step in her recovery, Tracey re-learns how to interact with men, build new friendships, handle money, and rekindle her relationship with her mother, all while staying sober, sharp, and dedicated to her future.

A decidedly female story of addiction, *The Big Fix* describes the unique challenges faced by women caught in the grip of substance abuse, such as the toxic connection between drug addiction and prostitution. Tracey's story of hope, hard work, and rehabilitation will inspire anyone who has been affected by substance abuse while offering hope for a better future."

## **The Big Fix: Hope After Heroin Details**

Date : Published March 8th 2016 by Seal Press

ISBN : 9781580056038

Author : Tracey Helton Mitchell

Format : Hardcover 272 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Autobiography, Memoir, Biography Memoir, Psychology, Biography

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# From Reader Review The Big Fix: Hope After Heroin for online ebook

## Michelle says

An incredible book of addiction and the miracle of recovery: "The Big Fix: Hope After Heroin" written by Tracey Helton Mitchell first publically noted for her appearance in the documentary "Black Tar Heroin: The Dark End of the Street" (2000). Today the rates of heroin addiction has reached epidemic levels in the U.S. quickly claiming the lives of too many people. Tracey's powerful story educates and raises awareness with the ability to offer hope and potentially save lives.

Beginning with her own addiction which led to stints of homelessness and jail time, with people pouring bleach water on her from open windows. Forms of communication while addicted included "yelling, crying, leaving" she described herself as a "charismatic hustler" who didn't hesitate to lie and cheat or compromise her dignity for drugs.

In 1998 she entered rehab, the staff were a combination of jailers/therapists. In the 90 day program she learned and worked hard at the recovery "programing" and was able to fully detox. Learning "everything" about her had to change, the process was painful as she confronted the fears and self-loathing that led her to addiction.

In the second part of her book: "Beyond The War On Drugs" Tracey discusses the recovery programs, mostly funded by private insurance or government programs like Medicare. Always looking for ways to cut costs, patients are "churned" through the system, with little accountability or concern for outcome. Typical short-term rehab of 28-30 days is barely enough time for the addicted to recover from PAWS (post acute withdrawal syndrome). The debate over offering medication to addicts in recovery remains controversial. The "one size fits all" approach of the 12 step program has received greater attention from medical professionals and specialists. Tracey explained the reasons the 12 step program didn't always work for her. In part three: "Heroin Addiction and Recovery: What You Need To Know" The drug is fully explained as are the effects on the human brain and body. The difference between ECP and Black Tar Heroin and its use. The "illegal nature" of the drug isolates users from the bridges of connection to others and recovery. Everyone is worthy of compassion and love, and users need reassurance that there is another better way to go without judgment.

In sobriety, and learning a new way to live, Tracey would form a relationship with the man who eventually became her husband. Returning to school, she completed her education earning a masters degree in Public Administration. As a Certified Addiction Specialist and supervisor, Tracey continues her vital work with other addicts. With her husband and 3 children, she lives in the S.F. Bay area. ~ With thanks to the Seattle Public Library.

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## **Paul says**

The Big Fix by Tracey Helton Mitchell is a stand out read for me this year. With the opium epidemic hitting an all time high(no pun intended) I wanted to read something that gave me more empathy for drug addicts. I'll be the first to admit I don't understand drug users at all. This was definitely a blind spot in my life and I just wanted to understand these people more. By reading Tracey Mitchell's book, I feel that I can better understand why these men and women turn to drugs in their lives.

The most important thing that I took away from reading this book is that most drug addicts are doing it because they either have depression or are in fact suicidal. Drug users are more likely to have been abused and have low self esteem. When the cost of heroine is so low and drug prescription companies get their patients addicted, heroine is now seen as an option. A lot of these users, like Tracey, just thought that they were suppose to be living their young adult in a party first mindset. They thought that they didn't want to have no regrets and to live life to its fullest but doing that with drugs is a mistake.

Even though Tracey talks about some of the awful things she does while on drugs, she does not glorify her behavior. This book is focusing on her recovery and how she got there. She focuses on the things that worked for her and is extremely critical of the things that she finds a detriment to her recovery. She is also very critical of men in a lot of support groups, as a lot of them hit on the women. Tracey talks a lot about the abusive relationships she's had with men and contrasts that with the relationship that she has with her current husband. Finally, the best thing about this book is just how much Tracey's worldview changes once she has children. Her struggle with having children is another obstacle that she had to overcome and reading her story is inspirational.

At the end of this book is very informative information about addiction, treatment, and drugs in general. If you are looking for a more non-fiction read to just read the basics of addiction, maybe just skip to the end of the book for those parts. Great read that I highly recommend for anyone wanting to gain empathy about drug addicts.

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## **Jennifer says**

This memoir was referenced in Dopesick so I needed to read it. Very raw and real. I will be suggesting this to my female AODA clients.

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## **Melinda says**

What turns a smart high school girl into a strung out, homeless junkie? I read this memoir to understand why a person chooses drugs, and found that the author does a fine job of telling her story, a story about negative body image, living with an alcoholic parent, and finding escape in painkillers prescribed after dental surgery. This memoir helped me understand the life and times of an addict and the way one brave woman escaped the certainty of the "penitentiary or the cemetery." Tracey Helton Mitchell tells her story with amazing honesty and integrity. The sections in the back of the book that deal with facts about heroin and navigating recovery are especially needed and helpful. Heroin used to be a long, drawn-out death sentence for every user. The

author, 28 years sober and dedicated to helping other addicts, demonstrates that no longer has to be the case. If you want to understand the current opiate holocaust, or if you care about someone who is an addict, you should read this book.

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### **Shannon Shepherd says**

I was surprised to learn quite a lot about drug addiction and the unique roads to recovery. I did not feel incredibly attached to Tracey Helton Mitchell as a protagonist, but more as a clinician who had lived through an atrocity of her own making and shares tremendous insight into the ineffective aspects of our social and criminal systems as structures which are meant to enable addicts to fix themselves, but which sometimes enslave and entrap them more. The rise in prevalence of heroin and overdoses in our society make this read especially important today.

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### **Suzanne Rose says**

I really loved this book. One of the best things about this book is that it stands far away from other addiction memoirs (partially because the author sets it apart in her very clear and heartfelt introduction) where she states that her book won't follow the formula of being pages and pages of sensory-dripping longing tinged details about using drugs and then suddenly in the last chapter a mysterious process occurs where the author gets clean--Helton sets herself apart by clearly stating throughout her text how relapse was a big part of her recovery, and even more helpful she lays out multiple routes and ways to get help and not all of those included being clean right away. I found her focus on recovery to be generous, helpful, and inspiring. She included a lot of women friendly advice about recover like the fact that sex work could be part of a woman's addiction history and that's often not addressed in places like AA and how women may face sexual predation in recovery which only makes the task of recovery harder. I also loved her advocating for harm reduction and ideas about harm reduction and how recovery is NOT one size fits all, multiple methods of recovery in conjunction with one another may be best. I particularly enjoyed her journey through self-acceptance when it came to realizing her dreams of becoming a mother post-heroin usage. It was an important story to tell, and one I hadn't yet heard. Ms. Helton's book is an extension of the good work she does both in her life and on the internet. I'm also an avid reader of her blog where you'll find some of the most lyric parts of this book first appearing, but also newer beautiful writings and philosophical reckonings with her past. Her voice is hauntingly good, and frank in all the right places. I've had some success teaching this text in my advanced memoir classes. I think others might also find it teachable.

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### **Violet says**

Through some sort of magic, I ended up following Tracey on instagram - having never seen (or heard of) her documentary or her book before that. Her writing is straight-forward, open, full of reality and hope (at the same time), funny, and smart. Definitely a good read.

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## **Mary says**

What an excellent read. Helton tells her story in a very straightforward style, which makes the facts of her journey all the more striking. She doesn't need to embellish or falsely glamorize the details to make it interesting. As a smart high-achieving teen, she loves the effect of prescribed opioids. She eventually falls into an 8-year heroin (and other drugs) habit that takes her from college Ohio to living in the alleys of SF's Tenderloin district. In *The Big Fix*, she shares how she finally got clean, why we need comprehensive harm-reduction programs, why there is no one-size-fits-all form of recovery, how recovery is different for men & women, and other drug- and recovery-related topics. This is a fascinating & insightful read. You'll plow through it.

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## **Lisa says**

I wanted to read this book after I saw an interview with the author. I found her to be very courageous. The book was very hard to read at times due to its subject matter. Overall an eye opening and powerful story of determination and self acceptance.

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## **Corinne Apezteguia says**

I read this as part of research for a project but it definitely helped me better understand where opioid addiction leads people and why/how it is so hard to break out of it. Mitchell talks about her addiction in a refreshingly candid (if heartbreaking) way. It changed the way I look at heroin addicts, homelessness (when it's a result of heroin addiction) as well as the way I view access to clean needles, etc.

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## **Janine Kovac says**

LOVED it.

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## **Patrick says**

My first ever book that I won in a give-away! And it is great.

Wow. I work in the mental health field and am always on the look for good works on substance use and this is it. An "insider" view to the life that can happen and the struggle to get out and stay out. Filled with some good facts, statistics and justifiable critiques of the systems meant to help.

I really appreciated how Ms. Mitchell makes no effort to look for sympathy or really rationalize her use of heroin and other substances. Rather, I feel that she tells her story in a way that demands dignity, which is what I attempt to offer and preserve with the folks I work with. One of the messages that I take away from this work is that life lead by substances really sucks but it is really possible to get through/past/beyond/etc those times and be part of the world. There is no sugar-coating of the difficulties in getting and staying clean

and I appreciate the emphasis on having a relapse plan - because you will need one.

A powerful, honest work that I will recommend to others. Having stories of others who have "made it out" is always helpful to pass on to those with whom I work who are in the throes of finding some hope.

Thank you for your work, Tracey.

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### **Joyce says**

Many things recommend this book. First, unlike most addiction memoirists, Tracey Helton Mitchell doesn't spend 90 percent of the book describing the hell her life was on heroin. She makes it clear it was hell and gives us enough to get the general idea but then she spend more than half the book describing her recovery and providing useful information to others who want to get into a lasting recovery. Excellent and recommended for its hopeful message.

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### **Sarah says**

#### **disturbing but hopeful**

we have a young woman in our family who has been struggling with heroin addiction for about five years now. after I heard Tracey interviewed on Fresh Air, I immediately bought this book. Tracey's story gives me hope that our niece will some day be free and healthy.

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### **Paula Rohde says**

I can't say enough about this wonderful book and the courage of Tracey Helton Mitchell for sharing her amazing journey. I would recommend this book for anyone - addict, parent, partner, sibling, layperson - anyone who wants to learn so much more about the disease and the HOPE for recovery. Tracey lays out numerous steps for all walks of life with many or no resources.

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