

Interview with Irene Watson, author of *The Sitting Swing: Finding Wisdom to Know the Difference*

Today, Tyler R. Tichelaar of Reader Views is pleased to interview Irene Watson, author of “The Sitting Swing: Finding Wisdom to Know the Difference.”

Irene Watson holds a Masters Degree in Psychology, with honors, from Regis University in Denver, CO. Her emphasis was spirituality and psychosynthesis. Irene’s life has taken her on many paths, with breakthrough results and exemplar growth, to find her authentic and true self. At present she is the Managing Editor of her book review and author publicity company, Reader Views, as well as president of a nonprofit organization, Higher Power Foundation, Inc. through which she facilitates transformational retreats. She lives with her husband on the banks of Barton Creek in Austin, Texas along with their Pomeranian, Tafton, a rescued cat Patches, and a rescued cockatiel Clement.

Tyler: Welcome, Irene. I am honored to have this opportunity to interview you today. To begin, will you tell us why you chose the title “The Sitting Swing” and why the title is appropriate for the book?

Irene: As a small child I had a rope swing, much like the one on the cover of the book. However, there was a rosebush behind it. I couldn’t swing on it because every time I would go back, I would hit the rosebush. The only thing I could do was sit on it. The sitting swing is a metaphor for my childhood—it was there, but I wasn’t able to be the child I was meant to be.

Tyler: The book begins with your visit to a recovery center called Avalon. Would you tell us why you first went there and what you were searching for?

Irene: To be really honest, the reason I went is because a lot of my friends had been at Avalon. Part of me wanted to fit in—to be “in the crowd.” At that time I didn’t think I had any issues but fitting in was very important to me. I can laugh about it now, realizing how goofy I was. That was such a surface attitude!! (Laughs.) Now, looking back, I was searching for a part of me I was seeing in my friends who had been at Avalon—peace, serenity, spirituality, and authenticity.

Tyler: Irene, will you explain to us who were the friends you are referring to since I understand you were a therapist at this time? Were they professional friends?

Irene: Many of my friends I met through being a therapist, others I met at church. Many of these people had been through Avalon. It was a close-knit group and everyone was very supportive of each other.

Tyler: What kind of therapy did you practice?

Irene: I practiced psychosynthesis. Basically it is a name for the process of personal growth, synthesizing various modalities to help the person achieve higher states of consciousness. I used a wide range of practical/clinical processes and techniques utilizing body energy, music/sound, alpha level systems as well as cognitive and spiritual methods.

Tyler: What made you decide to become a therapist? Did the childhood you write about in “The Sitting Swing” have a bearing on this decision?

Irene: There is a saying that goes something like—“When you are ready to learn, the teacher will present himself.” I believe I was searching for something to “fix” me and because I was in denial about my own issues, it came out as wanting to fix others. I also believe there was some genuine underlying interest in the various modalities that promote healing because during that time, I was in my own business as well as a counselor in the Employee Assistance Program for a police force, and I truly did relish seeing people moving from dysfunction to relief. I could celebrate with them as they saw their own accomplishments in recovery.

Also, I chose psychosynthesis because I could use the various modalities, not only cognitive or talk therapy. I believe healing needs to happen in all aspects—body, mind, and spirit.

Tyler: Plenty of self-help and clinical books are written for people undergoing different kinds of recovery, yet you chose to write a very personal memoir. Why do you think personal stories are important and helpful to readers who also want to recover?

Irene: It’s much easier to relate to a person—we are in the relational era right now. The readers can put themselves into my story and find something that is similar. They can recount their experience that may parallel my experience or may trigger something from their memory bank. In the end, by reading my story, they realize there is hope and freedom, there is a way out of turmoil and dysfunction, and there is a way to heal the past by re-writing the scripts passed down for generations.

Tyler: In “The Sitting Swing,” you provide numerous stories of your childhood and teen years. To sum it up, how you would describe that time in your life?

Irene: At that time when I was living it, or now, when I look back? (Laughs.) At that time it was horrible—I felt stifled and controlled at all times. I was being molded into someone I could never be. Now? It was horrible—I recognize I was stifled and controlled at all times...however, that being said, I can honestly say if I had any amount of freedom as a teen I would have joined a gang (if there was one) and became more of a rebel than I was. But, on the other hand, now that I’ve dealt with the issues of my childhood, I believe I’m a better person for it. I have a deep understanding for others and looking at the chain of events that have occurred in my lifetime, it was all meant to be. I needed to come full circle, to experience the traumas and dramas, to come to a realization of my authentic self. Without my experience, it just couldn’t have happened.

Tyler: Irene, you discuss your mother’s over-protectiveness a great deal in the book. Will you share with our readers why she was so over-protective? How do you feel about that part of her behavior now compared to when you were a girl?

Irene: She was over-protective because her first born child died within several months of birth. In her culture and community, my mother was blamed for the sickly child she bore because she was weak. She believed this; therefore, she wasn’t going to lose another child, me. Interestingly enough, even as a small child I knew something wasn’t right. I couldn’t pin point it at the time of course, but now remembering back to my thoughts, I felt stifled and didn’t fit in with other children.

Now, I also understand my mother’s behavior and why she behaved as she did. It was her only defense mechanism to cover her fears of another loss. Knowing this gives me a different perspective of her.

Tyler: You mentioned part of your mother’s reaction was based in her culture and community. I understand your family were immigrants to Canada. Will you tell us more about the family’s background, and what about it made your experience unique compared to other children growing up?

Irene: My grandparents/parents emigrated from Russia during difficult times and landed in a community in Northern Alberta where many people from their villages, or neighboring villages lived. They weren’t educated (my grandparents never did go to school, and three of them couldn’t read or write at all) and only knew the life scripts that were passed down through the generations. This doesn’t only happen in this culture, but others also.

Due to the lack of “knowing any different” the life scripts were lived as the generation before them did, with much matriarchal or patriarchal command. Because of the tight knit community, they all pretty much lived their lives the

same way and weren't aware of any dysfunctions or how behaviors affected their children. They just parented as their parents parented them.

I don't think my experience is unique at all. I'm sure there are many readers who will be able to parallel their lives to mine. Their experiences may not be exactly the same as mine, but when reading my story they will be able to reflect back on their lives and experiences when they felt the same way. In the end, they too will know there is hope and freedom, and it's never too late to heal wounds from the past.

Tyler: What do you think is the most important lesson you learned from your difficult upbringing?

Irene: Oh my, what a question! (Laughs.) The rebel part of me wants to say something like "find the birth order out first of possible participants before trying to create a gang!"

For me the most important lesson was how not to be a mother/parent. I knew I didn't want to parent like my parents did, but on the other hand I didn't know how to be any different. Looking back, many parenting styles were much like my parents' and came from fear and control. Yet, in some aspects I was inattentive and absent, trying not to control. I couldn't come up with a balance.

Tyler: How much time passed between your experience at Avalon and when you decided to write "The Sitting Swing"?

Irene: Ten years. It took me that long to make some major turnarounds in my life. During that time I also realized how many other people had the same issues as I have, and are struggling to "fix" themselves. I felt if I told my story and how I came to terms with many of the struggles in my life, I may be able to help others.

It was also very cathartic for me. Revisiting my life, seeing how I changed, and finding the wisdom within made me realize the path I did take, and where it had taken me. Basically, it became a full circle for me—back to the authenticity I was born with.

Tyler: One other item we should mention is what happened after "The Sitting Swing" was first published. I understand you had difficulty getting reviews for the book, which resulted in an unexpected new journey for you. Will you tell us a little bit about that experience?

Irene: (Laugh.) Oh yes, interesting journey. One thing I did experience when I turned over "my life and my will to God..." was to go on a journey I never even dreamed of! To make a long story short, I recognized there was a need for reviewers for books when I had trouble getting them for my book. So, I started a book review service—Reader Views. Well....it exploded the day I claimed God as the CEO!

I've talked the walk and never walked the talk of handing over my life and will to God. I took the risk and actually did it. Not an easy task for someone who is continually working on control issues. When the actual release happened within me God took over the company. Oh my goodness...I'm on the run to keep up with the direction He is putting me in. "It works, if you work it, and you work it, and you work it...."

Tyler: Now that you have a new career to focus on, what made you decide to bring out this revised edition of "The Sitting Swing" and what about this edition is different from the original?

Irene: There were many things with the first edition that had to be changed. Editing for one. I was very new to the publishing industry and didn't understand many of the aspects. I had big dreams for the original book but it didn't happen, and couldn't. Even though I won an award and got a review from Publishers Weekly, the book just couldn't take on the intended life until now.

Now, I'm in a different space, not only with the book but within my life. I have found the wisdom within. The story is the same, it will never change. However, what changed is the direction and opportunity. Besides the editing issues looked after, I've changed the cover and added a contemplation guide, resources—books and centers, as well as an Afterword.

The Afterword was the most important thing that needed to be added. It shows how my life script, through wisdom, was re-written and I came full circle to my authentic self. This is the part that was missing from the original part—the part that gives people hope and freedom in their own lives.

Tyler: Do you envision yourself writing more books or are you content to be involved with the publishing world in other ways?

Irene: It's possible I will. I'm back to facilitating retreats and from that may come another book. I know something is formulating but I don't have the clear vision of it yet.

Tyler: What kinds of retreats do you facilitate?

Irene: I'm just getting back to facilitating retreats. My first one will be at a Women's Retreat in September of this year. It is sponsored by a nonprofit foundation—Higher Power Foundation, Inc.

The retreats I facilitate are about introspection and finding a place inside oneself where the authentic self resides. The step-by-step program I devised as my thesis for my Masters Degree is very powerful and effective.

Tyler: Will you tell us a little about the step-by-step program, and also will “The Sitting Swing” or your personal story in general play any part in the retreat?

Irene: When I facilitate a weekend retreat, I take the participants through steps to go deep inside themselves and pull out an issue that needs working on—one that is creating turmoil in their lives. Then I guide them through a deep meditation, a place where there is no outside buzz (thoughts, etc.) There they are able to work on the issues themselves because outside influences and thoughts don't interfere. They are working strictly in the subconscious mind. During this time they write answers to a series of questions—basically coming to terms with the issue. Once this is done, the participant is able to accept the issue and move on. Also at the same time, they rewrite their script on how to deal with the same type of issue in the future. It's a very powerful process that works very quickly.

It is very similar to how I worked with clients when I was a therapist. However, I did use various other modalities to speed up the process, and it was on an individual basis.

“The Sitting Swing” will be available for the participants of the retreat to purchase; however, I will not use any part of it for my portion of the program. My portion of facilitation at the September retreat will follow Dr. Nancy Oelklaus, author of “[Journey from Head to Heart](#).” She will be facilitating in the morning and preparing the participants for my portion in the afternoon.

Tyler: Thank you, Irene, for joining me today. Before we go, will you let us know where readers can purchase a copy of “The Sitting Swing: Finding Wisdom to Know the Difference”?

Irene: Yes, of course! My website address is <http://www.irenewatson.com>. If readers order the book directly from me, I will personally autograph it and pay for shipping. Or it can be ordered from amazon.com or through the publisher <http://www.lovinghealing.com>

I want to mention proceeds from the sale of “The Sitting Swing” will go to Higher Power Foundation (<http://www.higherpowerfoundation.com>). It's a non-profit organization I'm the president of. Our mission is to support and grant funds to people attending spiritual/recovery retreats, workshops and seminars. It is time for me to give back, and this is one way of doing it.

Tyler: Thank you, Irene. It's been a real pleasure getting to interview you. I hope your book helps many others also find the strength and wisdom they are seeking.



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