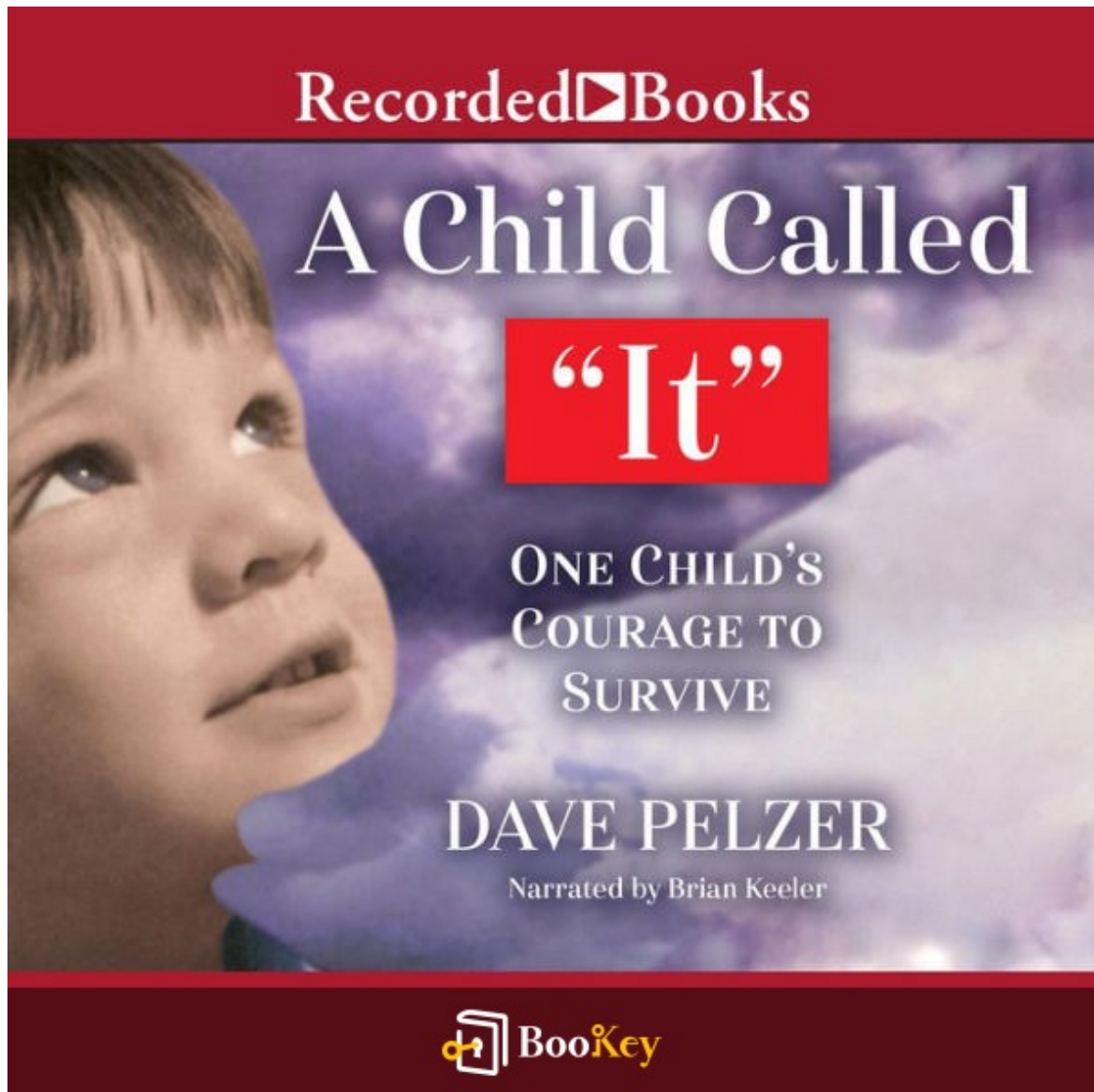


A Child Called "it" PDF

Dave Pelzer, Brian Keeler



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About the book

Childhood Abuse: The Story of Dave Pelzer

Dave Pelzer endured horrific abuse during his formative years, subjected to the wrath of his emotionally unstable, alcoholic mother. Stripped of his identity, he was seen by her not as a child, but as an 'it'—a mere slave.

Physically and mentally tormented, Pelzer faced extreme neglect and starvation, all while the outside world remained oblivious to the nightmare unfolding within the walls of his home. His father, aware of the cruelty, chose denial and the solace of alcohol rather than stepping in to protect him.

Yet, amid the torment and suffering, Pelzer discovered an unyielding resolve to survive and transcend his circumstances. Over time, he drew immense strength from his harrowing experiences, gaining resilience not only within himself but also recognizing the strength in others.

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A Child Called "it" Summary

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Who should read this book **A Child Called "it"**

"A Child Called 'It'" by Dave Pelzer and Brian Keeler is a powerful memoir that should be read by anyone interested in understanding the complexities of child abuse, resilience, and the human spirit. This book is particularly relevant for educators, social workers, and mental health professionals who work with at-risk youth, as it provides a stark and poignant perspective on the impact of trauma and neglect. Additionally, parents and caregivers can benefit from reading this book as it sheds light on the importance of nurturing and protection in early childhood development. Through Pelzer's harrowing experiences, readers can gain insight into the signs of abuse and the critical need for intervention, making it a vital read for those dedicated to fostering safe and supportive environments for children.

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Key insights of A Child Called "it" in table format

Title	A Child Called 'It'
Authors	Dave Pelzer, Brian Keeler
Publication Year	1995
Genre	Memoir
Theme	Child Abuse, Resilience, Survival
Setting	California, primarily during the 1970s
Main Characters	Dave Pelzer (the author), Dave's Mother, Dave's Father, Dave's Brothers
Plot Summary	The memoir recounts the harrowing childhood of Dave Pelzer, who endures severe abuse from his emotionally unstable mother. He details the neglect, physical abuse, and lack of basic needs, contrasting this with brief moments of hope provided by his father and the rare kindness from strangers.
Important Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Dave's mother's descent into alcoholism and abuse- Dave being forced to perform degrading tasks- Instances of neglect where he is denied food and care- The turning point of his eventual escape and placement in foster care



Title	A Child Called 'It'
Key Messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The impact of child abuse on emotional and psychological development- The importance of hope and resilience in the face of adversity- The need for awareness and intervention in cases of child abuse
Writing Style	Raw, emotional, and straightforward; reflects the traumatic experiences of childhood abuse
Reception	Widely acclaimed for its powerful and unflinching portrayal of child abuse; has sparked conversations about child welfare and support systems.

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A Child Called "it" Summary Chapter List

1. Introduction to the Life of Dave Pelzer and His Early Struggles
2. The Beginning of the Abuse: Understanding My Family Dynamics
3. A Picture of Despair: Daily Life as 'It'
4. Survival Instincts: Finding Ways to Cope with Neglect
5. The Impact of a Child's Resilience in Difficult Circumstances
6. Breaking Free: The Turning Point in My Life
7. Conclusion: The Lessons Learned and Hope for the Future

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1. Introduction to the Life of Dave Pelzer and His Early Struggles

Dave Pelzer, the author of "A Child Called 'It'", chronicles his harrowing experiences of childhood abuse and neglect, revealing the stark realities of his early life. Born into a family that, on the outside, seemed typical, Dave soon discovered that not all families are nurturing and supportive. His early struggles began within the confines of his home, where the seeds of his suffering were sown by those who were supposed to love and protect him.

Growing up in California during the 1970s, Dave was the third of five children in a family that had once been loving and jovial. However, things took a disastrous turn, particularly for him, as his mother's mental state deteriorated, leading her to focus her rage solely on him. Dave's childhood was marred by severe emotional, physical, and psychological abuse at the hands of his mother, who alternately ignored him, humiliated him, and treated him as though he were subhuman.

Dave's struggle was not just personal; it was steeped in a complex web of family dynamics that saw his siblings either complicit in the abuse or distant from the reality of his suffering. While his brothers often enjoyed the favor of their mother, Dave became the scapegoat, bearing the brunt of her wrath. This, he would later reflect upon, revealed the painful truth about how family loyalty and love can be twisted into cruelty.

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The early years of Dave's life were characterized by a longing for acceptance and a desperate need for love, which was repeatedly thwarted by the escalating violence and neglect he faced. His initial attempts to seek help were met with disbelief, as the adults in his life failed to see the signs of his plight. This lack of understanding underscored Dave's loneliness, as he grappled with feelings of worthlessness and despair.

In sharing his story, Dave Pelzer not only gives a voice to his own suffering but also highlights critical themes about the impact of child abuse and the resilience of the human spirit amidst overwhelming adversity. His childhood was a battleground, where each day was a fight for survival, setting the stage for the profound struggles that would follow as he transitioned from victim to survivor. In this introduction, we see the foundations of a narrative that transcends personal pain, evolving into a testament to hope and recovery.

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2. The Beginning of the Abuse: Understanding My Family Dynamics

In the early years of his life, Dave Pelzer lived in a seemingly normal household, but beneath the surface, his family dynamics were fraught with tension and dysfunction. His mother, who initially exhibited warmth and care, gradually transformed into a figure of neglect and abuse. This shift began to unfold as personal challenges and frustrations overwhelmed her, leading to a horrifying cycle of mistreatment directed at Dave.

Dave was the middle child in a family that appeared to function well to outsiders. His father was a firefighter who often shielded the family from his wife's anger, while his mother was responsible for the household management. However, as pressures mounted for his mother—ranging from financial concerns to personal disappointments—her temper became increasingly volatile. The loving mother who had once nurtured him began to express her frustrations on Dave, deeming him the scapegoat for an array of family problems.

This transformation marked the onset of the abuse, as Dave transitioned from a cherished child to an unwanted burden. Understanding the root of the abuse requires examining the complex family dynamics at play. His mother's changing behavior often left Dave in a state of confusion; he oscillated between being a loved child and a rejected outcast. This inconsistency



created an environment filled with fear and uncertainty, where Dave's basic needs for love and safety were not met.

The abuse often manifested through neglect, isolation, and emotional torment. Family gatherings that should have brought happiness were overshadowed by the looming presence of his mother's wrath. As his sibling received favors while he was neglected, Dave felt increasingly alone, not comprehending why he was being treated so poorly. This unequal treatment from his mother fostered a sense of worthlessness within him.

In this chaotic environment, Dave's father played a complicated role. Although he was generally a caring figure, he became an enabler in the situation. Often absent due to work, he failed to intervene when abuse occurred, leading Dave to feel abandoned and unheard. The lack of protection and support from his father exacerbated the situation, leaving Dave vulnerable to his mother's erratic moods.

This phase of intense emotional trauma set the stage for the dramatic events that would follow in Dave's life. Understanding the dynamics within his family is crucial in grasping not only the origins of the abuse he suffered but also how it shaped his perception of self-worth and resilience. As he navigated this challenging family environment, young Dave was left grappling with feelings of helplessness and confusion that would haunt him



throughout his childhood.

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3. A Picture of Despair: Daily Life as 'It'

Dave Pelzer's daily life as 'It' painted a haunting picture of despair, revealing the chronic neglect and immense suffering he endured throughout his childhood. As the third son in a troubled family with a mother struggling with her own demons, Dave was singled out for relentless abuse. His home transformed from a place of comfort into a living nightmare where basic necessities like love, safety, and food were luxuries he could only dream of.

Each day began with uncertainty. Dave awoke not to the sounds of a loving family but to the grim reality of his mother's wrath. She often greeted him with disdain, addressing him as 'It'—a term that stripped away his identity and humanity. In the eyes of his mother, he was no longer her son but an unworthy object. This dehumanization set a bleak tone for his daily existence and instilled a profound sense of shame and worthlessness in Dave.

Daily life consisted of fear and the constant anticipation of punishment. He would often be tasked with grueling chores that seemed designed to keep him busy and out of sight. Despite fulfilling these tasks to the best of his ability, there was no reward, only disdain, and neglect. His siblings, caught in their own struggles, either ignored his plight or were too afraid to intervene, leaving Dave isolated in his misery.



At school, the situation wasn't much better. While he longed for a normal childhood filled with friendships and laughter, Dave's appearance often betrayed his reality. His clothes were frequently dirty and tattered, and he often arrived with unkempt hair, reflecting the lack of care he received at home. His peers noticed the bruises and scars, remnants of his mother's violent episodes, but Dave felt compelled to hide his pain, fearing that disclosing his situation would lead to further punishment.

As the abuse intensified, Dave learned to navigate this world of despair with extreme caution. He developed a sixth sense for avoiding triggers that could provoke his mother's anger. Meals were often a source of anxiety; the unpredictable nature of his mother's treatment of him made him dread mealtimes. Food was often withheld, and when he was allowed to eat, it was sometimes given in unsanitary conditions or with a threat hovering over it—consume it quickly or face dire consequences.

The small moments of respite were fleeting. On rare occasions, his mother might momentarily display a semblance of affection, creating a glimmer of hope in Dave's heart. However, these fleeting moments were invariably followed by harsh reality as the cycle of abuse resumed, leaving him in a state of confusion and emotional turmoil.

Ultimately, living as 'It' became a desperate struggle for survival. Dave's



childhood was characterized by misery, neglect, and an ever-present sense of loss. Each day was a battle against the emotional and physical scars left by a mother who had long abandoned her role as a nurturer. In a world that felt overwhelmingly hostile, Dave's journey through this harrowing existence shaped not only his immediate reality but also laid the groundwork for the resilience he would need to cultivate in order to eventually escape the grasp of despair.

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4. Survival Instincts: Finding Ways to Cope with Neglect

Dave Pelzer's narrative in "A Child Called `It`" highlights a piercing struggle with neglect and abuse that reverberates through his childhood. Amidst the daily torment and the suffocating environment crafted by his mother's cruelty, Pelzer exhibits extraordinary survival instincts that help him cope with the overwhelming neglect he faces.

In a household where love is replaced by indifference and hostility, Dave quickly learns to adapt his behavior in order to avoid further confrontation and pain. He becomes acutely aware of his surroundings and develops a keen sense of observation. By monitoring the moods and actions of his mother, he attempts to predict when her anger might flare and seeks to position himself in a way that minimizes potential confrontation. This awareness of his environment serves as a critical survival mechanism, as he learns to sidestep the violence and emotional neglect that characterize his day-to-day life.

Moreover, Dave discovers ways to find solace, however fleeting it may be. He immerses himself in fantasy and imagination, transporting himself to places far removed from his harsh reality. These mental escapes provide a necessary reprieve from the emotional scars left by his mother's disdain and mistreatment. In his mind, he creates a life filled with joy and normalcy, a



stark contrast to the despair he experiences physically. This mental sanctuary becomes a haven where he can foster hope and resilience.

Food becomes another domain in which Dave exhibits his resourcefulness. The neglect from his mother often manifests in lack of food and nourishment, but he learns to adapt by scavenging and making the most of what little he is given. He resorts to stealing scraps from the trash or quietly taking food from his brothers' plates, thus displaying a survival instinct that underscores his will to endure. Each small victory—a stolen snack, a hidden morsel—serves as a reminder that he can assert some control over his chaotic environment.

Despite the emotional void inflicted by his mother, Dave's relationship with his brothers presents a glimmer of hope. Although they are also victims of neglect, they share moments of camaraderie that help him cope. The bond he forms with them, however fragile, is a testament to his natural inclination toward connection and mutual support. Even in their shared suffering, these brief interactions provide him a sense of belonging that counteracts the crushing loneliness that pervades his home life.

All these coping mechanisms—mental escape, resourcefulness in securing food, and nurturing bonds with siblings—emphasize the tenacity of a child's spirit in the face of overwhelming adversity. Dave Pelzer's instincts for



survival showcase not only the depths of his resilience but also shed light on the complex interplay between neglect, reaction, and the innate human desire to survive against all odds.

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5. The Impact of a Child's Resilience in Difficult Circumstances

In "A Child Called 'It'," Dave Pelzer illustrates the remarkable capacity for resilience that can exist even in the harshest of circumstances. As he navigates the perilous landscape of his childhood, marked by neglect and abuse, Pelzer's survival is a testament to the innate strength many children exhibit when facing adversity. This resilience is shaped not only by his immediate desire to escape pain but also by an underlying hope for a better future.

Despite the severe emotional and physical challenges he endures at the hands of his mother, Pelzer finds ways to maintain his spirit. His ability to detach—mentally and emotionally—from the abuse is a critical survival skill. While living under the oppressive conditions that render him nothing more than 'It' in the eyes of his mother, he develops a vivid imagination, which serves as a refuge. This imaginative world provides him solace, allowing him to envision scenarios that transcend his grim reality.

Moreover, Pelzer's experiences teach him the importance of perseverance. Even when faced with diminishing hope and constant cruelty, he clings to the belief that one day he will escape. Each day he survives becomes a small victory, fueling his determination not to succumb to the darkness that envelops his life. The human capacity to endure significant trauma often



stems from the desire for normalcy and the instinct to protect oneself from further harm.

Pelzer also draws strength from fleeting moments of love and kindness, however sparse they may be. Memories of a more loving family life linger, empowering him to fight for those feelings once more. These memories serve as a catalyst for his resilience, propelling him toward an instinctual belief that he deserves a life free of pain and filled with affection. Such moments become critical lifelines that help him sustain his will to survive.

The resilience showcased in Pelzer's story is also reflective of broader themes found in child psychology. Children, when faced with similar abuse or neglect, exhibit a range of coping mechanisms, all of which highlight the strength of the human spirit. Understanding this resilience can not only shed light on how children handle adversity but also encourage adults to foster environments where children feel safe and valued.

Ultimately, Dave Pelzer's journey underscores that resilience is not merely about survival; it's about finding ways to thrive despite overwhelming odds. His story is an inspiring testament to the capabilities of the human spirit, encapsulating the idea that, even in dark times, the hope for a brighter future can ignite the will to rise above one's circumstances. This ability to adapt, overcome, and dream is a powerful message for all, especially for those who



may feel trapped in their own despair.

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6. Breaking Free: The Turning Point in My Life

In the harrowing journey of my childhood, a defining moment emerged that marked the gradual yet monumental shift from victimhood to self-advocacy. Living under the constant shadow of abuse, I found myself submerged in despair, emotionally and physically trapped in an environment that sought to break my spirit. However, as the years passed, a flicker of hope ignited within me, leading to the turning point of my life.

The turning point came not in a single, life-altering event but rather through the accumulation of small glimmers of realization about my worth as a person. After enduring relentless torment and dehumanization at the hands of my mother, I began to recognize the intrinsic strength that resided within me. This awakening was not easy; it was intertwined with fear and uncertainty amidst the chaos of my daily existence.

As I approached my teenage years, I became increasingly aware that my situation was not just a consequence of my family dynamics but also indicative of broader societal issues. I started to observe that my peers, although they too faced challenges, were not subjected to the same depths of cruelty. This realization struck me like a bolt of lightning—it was the first step in acknowledging that my life could be different, that I had the choice to change my circumstances.



The catalyst for my eventual escape and liberation from the grip of abuse was a series of interventions from teachers and social workers who began to notice the signs of neglect and the bruises on my body that marked my soul. Their compassion began to shatter the walls of silence I had built to protect myself from the world's judgments. Each connection I made with those who attempted to help created an invisible thread of hope that bound me closer to the idea of freedom.

There was a pivotal moment when I found the courage to confide in one of my teachers. I had lived in silence for so long, but that day, as I described the abuse and neglect, I felt a surge of liberation. For the first time, I was able to voice my pain and share my story. This act of bravery initiated a chain reaction; my teacher took immediate action and reported my situation to the authorities.

With their support, I was finally removed from the toxic environment that had stifled my existence and plunged me into despair for so long. The moment I stepped out of that house and into the unknown felt surreal. It was both terrifying and exhilarating. I was free, and yet I had no idea what lay ahead. The road to recovery was daunting, but for the first time in my life, I felt a sense of agency over my fate.

Breaking free from my past was a gradual process, requiring immense

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resilience. I learned that healing did not happen overnight; it was a journey marked by small victories and setbacks. The support of loving foster families and therapists introduced me to a nurturing environment, allowing me to reclaim my identity and sentiment of worth. Each day, I discovered new pieces of myself—strengths, interests, hopes—that had long been dormant under the weight of trauma.

This turning point profoundly reshaped my understanding of who I was and who I wanted to become. The resilience I developed throughout my childhood as a survival mechanism became the foundation for reclaiming my life. I learned that I was not 'It'; I had a name, a story, and most importantly, a future waiting to be filled with hope.

As I reflect on this transformative journey, I understand that breaking free was not merely about escaping a painful past. It was about embracing my identity, cultivating joy, and cultivating a future marked by possibilities rather than pain. This chapter of my life taught me invaluable lessons about resilience, the importance of speaking out, and the power of love and understanding in healing.

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7. Conclusion: The Lessons Learned and Hope for the Future

Dave Pelzer's harrowing journey from a severely abused child to a successful adult serves as a poignant reminder of the resilience of the human spirit. Through his experiences, several lessons emerge that are vital not only for those who may find themselves in similar predicaments but also for society as a whole.

Firstly, Pelzer's story highlights the importance of recognizing and reporting child abuse. It emphasizes that silence surrounds many cases, often allowing abuse to fester behind closed doors. The role of teachers, healthcare providers, and neighbors in identifying signs of abuse cannot be overstated, and active intervention can be the difference between life and death for vulnerable children. Pelzer's brave decision to speak out and seek help ultimately paved the way for his escape from a tortured existence.

The second lesson is about the power of resilience. Despite the horrific circumstances he endured, Pelzer managed to preserve a sense of hope and determination. His resourcefulness and ability to adapt allowed him to survive an environment designed to break him. This resilience is a potent reminder that, even in the darkest moments, individuals have inner strengths waiting to be discovered.

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Moreover, Pelzer's life story underscores the profound impact that positive relationships can have on a child's development. After experiencing unimaginable neglect and abuse, the warmth of caring figures in his life, such as teachers and foster parents, showed him a different, more nurturing world. This highlights the crucial importance of supportive adults in the lives of at-risk children. Communities must foster environments that encourage mentorship and involvement, offering guidance and stability to those who need it most.

Pelzer's journey also reinforces the notion of personal agency. He fought fiercely against his circumstances, reminding us that no matter how dire one's situation appears, seeking change is always possible. This lesson encourages individuals facing challenges to take control of their destinies and work towards a better future.

Looking towards the future, Pelzer inspires not only hope but action. His advocacy for children's rights has become a significant part of his legacy. He urges society to be vigilant and proactive in the fight against child neglect and abuse, which is still prevalent today. By sharing his experiences, he opens a dialogue about the importance of healing, support, and the necessity for systemic change in child protection laws.

In conclusion, "A Child Called 'It'" is not merely a recount of trauma; it is a

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testimony to hope, resilience, and the fundamental belief in the possibility of a better tomorrow. Dave Pelzer's story is a call to arms for all to recognize the signs of abuse, champion the cause of vulnerable children, and advocate for a future where no child has to endure what he experienced.

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5 Key Quotes of A Child Called "it"

1. 'I had to fight the battle of the mind, to overcome the pain.'
2. 'It's not the size of the child that matters, but the size of the will to survive.'
3. 'Life is a series of choices, and I chose to be strong.'
4. 'They can take everything away from you, but they can never take away your will to live.'
5. 'The most powerful weapon on earth is the human soul on fire.'





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