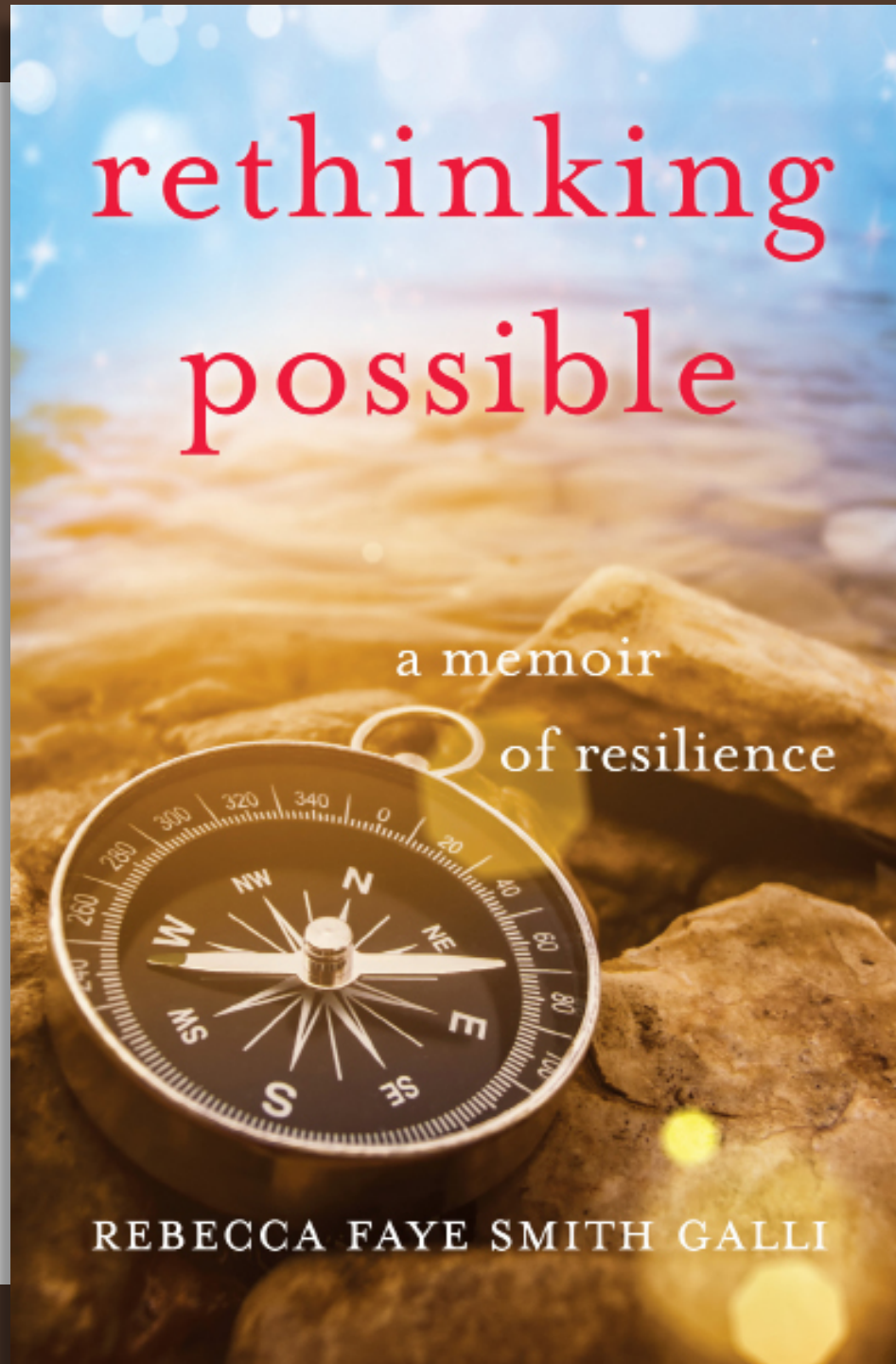


# Rebecca Faye Smith Galli

## Press Kit



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*Rethinking Possible*  
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**“FOR A FAMILY WHO  
KNEW SO MUCH...  
WE KNEW NOTHING  
THAT COULD HAVE  
PREPARED US FOR  
THAT KIND OF LOSS.”**

**— *RETHINKING POSSIBLE***

**REBECCA FAYE SMITH GALLI**

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# ***RETHINKING POSSIBLE: A MEMOIR OF RESILIENCE***

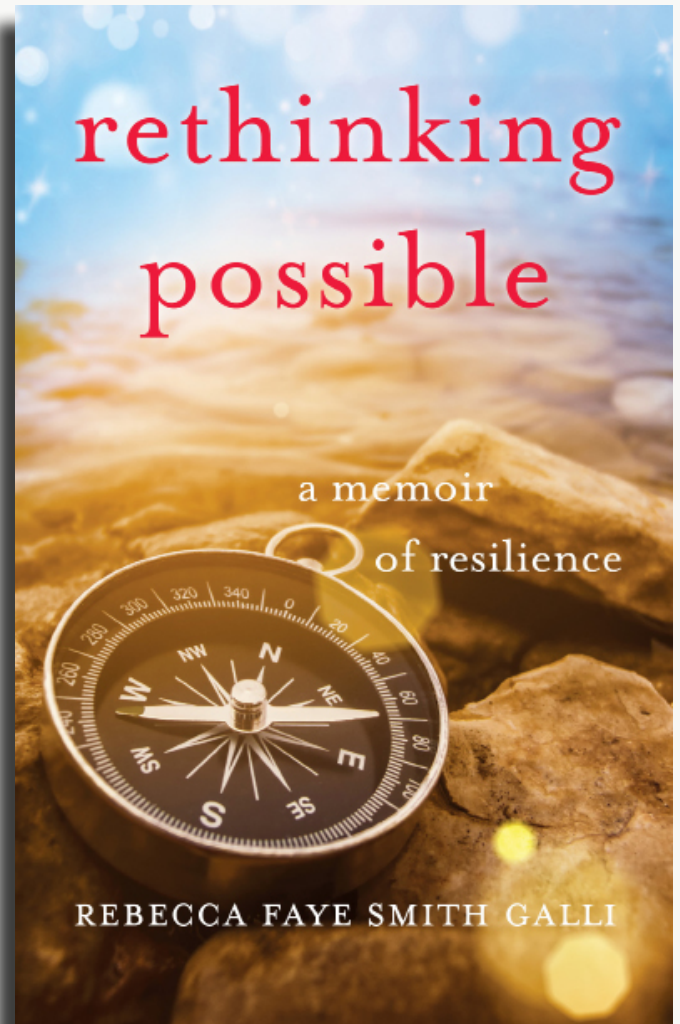
**BY REBECCA FAYE SMITH GALLI**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

BALTIMORE, MD — One of the hardest lessons in life is learning how to let go, especially when faced with life-changing tragedy and loss.

Rebecca Faye Smith Galli was born into a family that valued the power of having a plan. Her 1960s southern upbringing was idyllic—even enviable. But life does not always go according to plan, and when her 17-year-old brother died in a waterskiing accident, the slow unraveling of her perfect family began. There was her son's degenerative, undiagnosed disease and subsequent death; her daughter's autism diagnosis; her separation; and then, nine days after the divorce was final, the onset of the transverse myelitis that would leave Galli paralyzed from the waist down. Despite such devastating tragedy, Galli maintained her belief in family, in faith, in loving unconditionally, and in learning to not only accept, but also embrace a life that had veered down a path far different from the one she had envisioned.

Deeply personal and profoundly inspiring, *Rethinking Possible: A Memoir of Resilience* (She Writes Press, June 2017) by Rebecca Faye Smith Galli is a powerful narrative about being dealt life's most difficult and painful cards, and finding the resilience within to let go, and rethink what's possible.



**An Inspiring, Powerful, and Deeply Personal New Memoir on Resilience  
in the Wake of Life-Changing Loss**



# ABOUT REBECCA FAYE SMITH GALLI

Rebecca Faye Smith Galli is an author and columnist who writes about love, loss, and healing. Surviving significant loss has fostered an unexpected but prolific writing career.

The parent of a daughter with autism, Becky became an officer and founding board member in 2000 for Pathfinders for Autism, a Baltimore-based non-profit organization whose mission is to improve the lives of those with autism and their families. Additionally, she has been a board member for the League for People with Disabilities, where she served on the advisory committee for Camp Greentop, a therapeutic recreation camping program that her daughter attended. She is also active in the Transverse Myelitis Association and has participated in Kennedy Krieger's Activity Based Restorative Therapy programs.

Becky's passion for writing has also helped cultivate her healing process by allowing her to observe, record, and reflect upon her experiences. *The Baltimore Sun* published her first column about playing soccer with her son—from the wheelchair. 400 published columns later, she launched "Thoughtful Thursdays—Lessons from a Resilient Heart"—a popular weekly column where Becky shares her thoughts on finding inspiration and positivity in the aftermath of hardship. She's also a contributor to *The Baltimore Sun's* Op-Ed page, *Midlife Boulevard*, *Nanahood*, and *The Mighty*. Her memoir, *Rethinking Possible*, will be published in June 2017 by She Writes Press.

A native of Hickory, North Carolina, and Huntington, West Virginia, Becky resides in Lutherville, Maryland, just outside of Baltimore.

# SELECT PRAISE

## FOR REBECCA FAYE SMITH GALLI'S WORK

"Forthright, honest, and bold, Galli tells a story that could be so easily overwhelming or sentimental, with such grace and elegance and clarity, I could not stop reading once I began.

Good humor, kindness, and love shine off of every page."

- **Heather Sellers, author of *You Don't Look Like Anyone I Know***

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"Becky writes with a chip on her shoulder and laughter in her heart. This lady knows where to find gold in the day's routine experiences. When you read a Becky Galli column, you walk away with something that will get you past the bumps in life."

- **Jack Williams, Associate Editor, *ONE Magazine***

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"Becky has a knack for striking a chord."

- **Richard Gross, former Op-Ed editor, *The Baltimore Sun***

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"Becky lives a different life than most of us and does it with the same graciousness, strength, passion, doubts and power we all envision having. *Rethinking Possible* is a quick read that delivers a powerful message for those who stop and listen."

- **Cristina Sadowsky MD, Kennedy Krieger Institute, Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, former physician, Christopher Reeves**

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"A rare literary touch to my morning newspaper...God has blessed you with an exceptional gift."

- **D. Spence, *Herald Dispatch* reader**

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# Q/A WITH REBECCA FAYE SMITH GALLI

**If you could sum up the single best piece of advice you'd want to pass on to others about going through the stages of grief, what would it be?**

*Be patient with yourself.*

In my experience, there are no "stages of grief." There are cycles of grief. Just when you think you've moved from shock to anger to acceptance, or any of the stages in between, another anniversary or a shared experience or even a special sound or smell triggers a memory and the whole process starts all over again. So be patient with yourself. *Grief is a strange companion.* (RFSG quote) Just when you think you have it under control, it pops out, demanding attention. Don't try to manage it; honor it. Prepare for it by knowing yourself. Know *what* lifts your spirits and keep that arsenal ready for use. Know who lifts your spirits and keep them informed of how you are doing. Do NOT isolate. Find at least one person, preferably someone not as deeply impacted by the loss as you are, and check in with them regularly.

Be patient with the process, too. *Grief is as unique as your fingerprint.* (RFSG and quoted in the book) Don't waste your time or energy comparing your progress to others. DO spend time with others who have had similar journeys, but ONLY IF they can be helpful. Don't be afraid to be selfish; move toward those who help you and create boundaries (or let other loved ones do it for you if you can't find the strength) to limit your contact with those who are not helpful.

**What challenges or fears did you face with writing and publishing *Rethinking Possible* and how did you overcome them? What did you find most rewarding about the experience?**

The biggest challenge was reliving the pain and giving it context. The book spans nearly fifty years in my life, from a pre-vacation supper at age six to a "blended" family vacation dinner at age fifty-four. Getting into the mindset of a six-year-old, a twenty-year-old, a newly married, recently divorced, a paralyzed thirty-eight-year old with four kids, etc. forced a recalling not only of the events, but of the time period context. It's easy to forget that email was new in 1997. Google didn't exist when I was searching for services for my daughter with autism. It was challenging to find ways to remind the reader of that while keeping them in the story. But the most difficult part of the writing was to relive those losses and to stay in character context and be true to my emotional age. It was hard, even embarrassing, to write that I was angry at my brother for dying—but it was the truth for my 20-year-old self. Now, almost forty years later, I understand that anger as part of the grieving process. I'm not angry now—at least not as often. I'm mostly grateful that I had a brother for seventeen years. Some never have the experience of having a brother at all.

To write in context, I would isolate for days at a time to re-enter that stage of my life. My sister was my anchor. I would tell her what I was writing about each day and ask her to check in on me at the end of the day.

By far the most rewarding aspect of reliving and writing about these losses is the opportunity it's given me to connect with others who have been through similar losses. We may write alone, but our words have the capacity to connect us to a community. To know you are not alone in the darkness of loss is a powerful, rewarding discovery, one I am determined to nurture in my future writings.

**Q/A CONTINUED...**

### **What message do you hope to advocate to readers about overcoming tragedy to find their inner resilience?**

To be honest, I don't think we "overcome" tragedy. At best, we learn to live through it and with it. That's what resilience is to me, constantly seeking and learning to live a good life DESPITE significant losses. I've never "gotten over" my brother's death, or my son's mysterious diagnosis and death, or my paralysis. Yet, I've owned these experiences and tried to learn and live through them. Over time, I have accepted each one as a part of me.

*Life can be good, no matter what.* (RFSG quote) is the philosophy that sustains me. Despite the "whats" of life, it can be good. This I firmly believe and try to live each day. Note the word, "can," though. It takes effort to believe this and to actively pursue it.

### **Your book is very detailed, with specific references to smells, sounds, and conversations - did you keep a journal or did you write from memory?**

Both. I relied heavily on my father's book, *Sit Down, God. . . I'm Angry* for the details about my brother's death. His vivid descriptions time-warped me back to the scene, but my memory had to kick in to recall my twenty-year-old mindset. After Matthew's seizures, I began keeping a journal. It was the only way I could capture my spinning thoughts and put them to rest. Then in 1997, six months after my paralysis, a friend introduced me to the latest craze—the internet. Shortly after that, I reconnected with a high school friend through email who wanted an update on my life and my adjustments to paralysis. Our exchanges created an email journal that documented nearly twenty years of experiences and reflections and were the basis for my newspaper column career.

### **With over 400 newspaper columns under your belt, plus generating ongoing content for your weekly blog—"Thoughtful Thursdays — Lessons from a Resilient Heart"—what was the process like for you to go from writing personal essays to composing a 330-page memoir?**

It was a straight-up learning curve! Creating the structure for this book took years. I had so much material from my journals, email correspondence, and newspaper columns that it was tough deciding what to keep in and what to leave out. As they say, "I didn't know what I didn't know," so I found professionals to help me sort it out. Questions like these helped:

*What is the book about?*

*What does your main character want?*

*What take-aways do you have to offer your readers?*

Over time (20 years!) and many formats, it became clear the book was about resilience and my dogged pursuit of the closely-knit family life I experienced before the death of my brother. Along the way, I'd found comfort and inspiration from many sources so I decided to include quotes that have helped me through each wave of loss. With this purpose in mind, it was easier to select what to include. I chose a chronological format with a quote to anchor each chapter.

### **How has the phrase "rethinking possible" served to encourage, motivate, and guide you on your personal journey of resilience?**

At its core, I think resilience translates into a foundation of hope. Yet hope is a tricky emotion. It can be a wonderfully sustaining emotion, but it can also be exhausting.

In my book, I talk about the benefit of pursuing parallel paths after loss, especially when the future is uncertain. Sometimes it's helpful to pursue hope and reality at the same time. Often what we hope for just isn't possible. The key to resilience, at least for me, is to temper hope with reality. In essence, resilience is a process of constantly rethinking what is possible after we have accepted a new reality.

After significant losses, it often takes tremendous and sustained effort to find hope within our newly-defined reality. In truth, that's why I write a weekly column and journal daily—to remind myself that life can be good, no matter what.

### What does the future hold for you as an author?

More books! Based on my Thoughtful Thursday's column, I am working on *Reframing Possible: A Daybook of Inspiration*. I'm a big believer in my morning Quiet Time. I read, journal, meditate and reflect every day and enjoy short daily snippets of inspiration. *Reframing Possible* will give a short message to ponder with a suggestion on how to reframe what's possible for that day.

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## EXCERPT FROM *RETHINKING POSSIBLE*

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### Prologue

WE WERE FIVE, until we weren't. Our world was orderly and predictable, until it wasn't. We knew so much about love, laughter, and the joy of being family, until we didn't. I remember one Friday night meal so well. Especially my prayer, the one that still haunts me.

It was summertime and we'd been preparing for weeks. In 1964, I was six years old and I thought I knew everything. I was the rule-follower and vigilant enforcer, "in charge," so I thought, of my four-year-old brother, Forest, and my baby sister, Rachel who was three.

After each trip to the grocery store, we would watch Mom set aside one or two items for the "beach box," a sturdy cardboard box she tucked beside the refrigerator, far out of our reach. Saltines, Peter Pan peanut butter, Mt. Olive dill pickles, and two boxes of Life cereal filled the front, while the special treats, Lance cheese crackers and Little Debbie oatmeal pies, were mostly hidden near the back.

Our plan was to head out before daybreak the next morning for our annual two-week trip to Myrtle Beach. My siblings and I colored as we waited in the den for Dad to get home. It was almost time for dinner, a family staple you could set your watch by. Six o'clock was the usual magic hour when all outside distractions were turned off, put up, or otherwise silenced so we could share an uninterrupted family meal together. We knew no other way to dine.





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