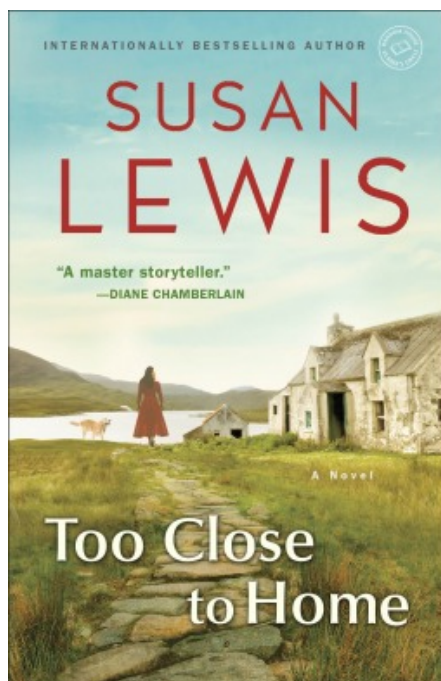




Too Close To Home

Susan Lewis

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Sometimes the truth lies closer than you think. The compelling and heart-rending new novel from the *Sunday Times* Top Ten bestselling author of *Behind Closed Doors*.

Jenna and Jack Moore have moved their family to Wales for a fresh start. For vivacious, happy-go-lucky fifteen-year-old Paige the future is full of promise.

But suddenly everything changes. Paige becomes more and more withdrawn. The closeness she once shared with her mother a distant memory.

It then becomes clear that Jack has secrets too. Preoccupied with her younger children, her husband's fidelity and their fledgling publishing company, Jenna doesn't realise the extent of her eldest daughter's unhappiness until the unthinkable happens.

And the nightmare is only just beginning...

Too Close To Home Details

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Author : Susan Lewis

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From Reader Review Too Close To Home for online ebook

Nancy says

When I began this book, I did not really care for it. No single character stood out and I found myself scanning the first quarter of it in hopes that something would grab me. I figured if I could keep the names straight that I would eventually get in a rhythm. I continually had the feeling that there was going to be more to the story. What I did not realize was that Susan Lewis was not sure what that more should be. Was it a women's fiction novel centered on divorce and its daily discoveries or was it a young adult novel centered on bullying? Unfortunately, the two stories are somewhat interwoven with an unsatisfactory conclusion for both.

Jenna Moore and her husband Jack leave their London home when Jack loses his job and is unable to find another. He has the brilliant idea of starting his own online publishing business on the Welsh coast while Jenna is quietly in the background trying to write a follow up to a previously successful novel. Meanwhile, fifteen-year-old daughter Paige is immersed in her own battles at school. Apparently, the campus bully has decided to make Paige's life hell and if it were not for a new anonymous online friend, things would have tumbled completely out of control.

Little did both mother and daughter realize that life would get worse before it could ever have a chance of getting better. As Jenna discovers lie upon lie falling out her husband's mouth and Paige realizes that her new online friend may not but a friend after all, both Moore women have decisions and choices to make. With the inability of speaking to each other, both Jenna and Paige seem to be on their own course until they can emotionally make it back to their family.

I know that the author tried to give the book a nice little happily ever after bow at the end, but it did not work for me. After trying to throw everything possible into the plot, it still fell flat and I felt that the author was just as tired of writing as I was of reading.

Nicole Overmoyer says

Nope. I realize I'm in the majority here but... I just can't finish the book. To finish a book, there's got to be at least one character I'm rooting for and... I found myself rooting against everyone. And that's just no fun. So I quit at 40%. I couldn't help it.

I received a copy of this book through NetGalley in exchange for an honest & original review.

Heidi The Hippie Reader says

Bullying is a very serious issue. I felt that Lewis' treatment of it was over the top, her characters were either unlikeable or unbelievable, and the whole story was far too negative. Lewis claims that she wrote it this way to show the real struggle that many young people go through, but it turned ridiculous and then repetitive. The only reason that I finished this book is because it is the club pick for this month. If it had not been, I would have set it aside.

I believe that the group the author talks about at the end of her book is doing some really good things, but this book is not worth the read.

If you're looking for more books on this topic try *Finding Jake* by Bryan Reardon or *Nineteen Minutes* by Jodi Picault.

Rebecca says

this was an advance review copy from www.lovereadings.co.uk - thank you to them sending it me - as always an excellent novel from susan lewis, I always enjoy her books. they are perfect holiday books or for when you want to escape into someone elses life for a bit. The details she weaves into the characters and their personalities is perfect.

I always feel part of the family when I read one of her books. you feel included, desperate to find out what is going on and how it will end.

in this one jenna and jack move to wales to start a new life with their children. not everything goes to plan leaving the family trying to scrape themselves back together all the while not noticing what is going on with paige.

one of the best susan lewis novels I have read for a while, im looking forward to the next

Steph says

A good book with a lot of strong interesting characters.

Rather slow to start and hard to get into at first but the bullying for Paige was quite horrific but at the same time it made good reading. Paige really irritated me at times with her resolution to stay quiet and she wouldn't stand up for herself or fight back and I understand that in reality that isn't always easy to do but Paige is portrayed as a strong character so were was she for most of the story.

Jenna's troubles with her husband were kinda predictable and it was obvious who he was having an affair with, would have been more entertaining if it had been a surprise.

The ending was good in places but for the massive build up and anticipation I felt it was a let down with regards Paige but I'm glad that after it all Jenna stood strong when it came to her errant husband.

Anthea says

Started off fine but gets progressively draggy as the book goes on.

Blurb did not fulfill the expectation of the plot at all. There weren't any deep dark family secrets. Everything was pretty much spelled out. There wasn't really a plot hole/mystery etc. to keep the readers wanting to get to the end of the book. However, I kept pressing on hoping something interesting/captivating would come up but it didn't.

This was my first book from Susan Lewis and I'd probably wouldn't read another one of hers.

Bookread2day says

What I loved about Too Close Home by Susan Lewis is the family of characters that are so easy to believe in and have feeling for. Jenna and Jack move to Wales for a fresh start running their own publishing business. But somehow the nightmare is only just beginning. I honestly think this one of Susan Lewis best novels that I have read. I am looking forward to Susan's next novel.

Christine says

Thanks to NETGALLEY for the chance to read and give an honest review.

I love books written by Susan Lewis, I enjoy her writing style.

This is true family drama, Jenna and Jack move to Wales to have a new start, things do not go well, their marriage begins to fall apart. The real drama in this book surrounds Jenna's oldest daughter, Paige, who is experiencing a common problem for teenagers in this day and time. It is heart breaking to see the downward spiral, that happens to her.

Jenna is pretty obsessed with the failure of her marriage, that she misses a lot that is going on with her daughter. You feel angry at her for taking so long to see how much pain her daughter is in, but you also realize that it could happen to anyone.

The writing is great, the book does drag in a few spots, but picks back up. This is a serious read, and tugs at every heart string.

Thank you Susan Lewis for your fantastic writing.

Judy Collins says

A special thank you to Random House and NetGalley for an ARC in exchange for an honest review. 4.5 stars

Susan Lewis returns following *Never Say Goodbye* and *No Place to Hide* (recommend both), with **TOO CLOSE TO HOME** --- another emotional highly-charged novel addressing today's contemporary and critical social issues facing relationships, kids, teens, and families.

Bullying, victims, infidelity, fraud, abuse, and suicide (cyber, physically, and mentally) --crossing into mystery and psychological-suspense; a complex and riveting tale, appealing to the young adult audience, as well as parents and mature adults.

After reading many reviews, my thoughts will be much more detailed than I had originally intended. I feel a strong need to speak out on behalf of the book and bullying. There is much depth to the novel, and do not want anyone to bypass the importance of the subject material, or the impact of this eye-opening novel, even though it is fiction, or due to some parts some may find disturbing.

Susan addresses honestly, real major issues our children face daily. Also how adults become involved with their own problems, and may not always be paying attention. We need to be educated in order to help.

Meet the Moore's: Jenna and Jack parents, fifteen-year-old daughter. Paige, and younger children Josh, age eight, and five-year-old twins. Paige was close to her stepfather, Jack. Her real father had abandoned them when Paige was barely a year old, and by the time Paige was seven Jenna was married to Jack, and later her

biological died in a rock-climbing accident, without knowing him.

The family recently moved to Wales, after Jack had lost his job as the sales manager for a leading publisher. Their initial plan was for him to find another position in a similar field, but unfortunately it hadn't work out that way. The industry and people were being laid off and the competition was fierce. When things were going his way, he was great; however, lately, not so much. When he announced they should relocate to Wales, Jenna decided to go along without questioning his motives.

Jenna was a published writer and respected freelance editor. In combination with his publishing history they could work for themselves as an online publisher. She thought possibly having Jack's mind on a new business would help his attitude. She was suffering from writer's block. She was facing the prospect of having to repay her advance if she could not come up with a synopsis.... However, she was still at, Chapter One. Maybe a new business and a new start is just what Jack and the family needed.

Shortly after moving, Jenna becomes more focused and worried about her husband than what is happening with her daughter, Paige. Trying to write a book, and launch a new business, and four children. A teen in a new school, is sometimes not a good combination. Many emotions, personalities, jealousy, and social media madness. Jenna realizes Paige is going through the typical teen stuff and aware they keep things secretive--- she does seem a bit distracted. She does not mention any problems at school.

Pretty soon the family begins to slowly **IMplode**.

Paige is being bombarded with hate mail in an effort to make her feel small and disliked, someone is sending lots of spiteful message on Facebook, ridiculing her, doctoring explicit photographs to try and make it seem they are of her. It has turned to physical, punching, slapping, and worse (bad stuff)... From horrible sick lies, emails, ugly texting, online chat rooms, Facebook, YouTube, cyber-bullying and sexting, Paige wished they had never moved here.

She could not bear her so called friends getting together and not including her. Everyone is making her feel like a waste of space, a whore, a loser and a piece of rubbish. They are relentless and her life is ruined. Someone is using a name of Julie (they are a coward, hiding behind another alias). Why? What is the motive? She has done none of these things they are saying.

What kind of person does this? What abuse has the abuser suffered – turning them into a monster? Some children derive a certain amount of pleasure from cruelty, whether it is caused from their own environment or a psychological disorder.

The texts, posts, and IM's were coming from loads of different people, numbers, name—she does not recognize. She would love to block them, but feels she needs to stay on top of it, so reads them, staying in constant stage of emotional stress. She now resents her step dad and mom, an affair, as they are so wrapped up—do they not realize she needs support and help? Plus, the younger siblings she needs to help with.

Why has this person not used their real identity? Then the texts get more personal involving their family. Always appearing she is writing this stuff. Who is hacking her accounts?

In the meantime, Jack starts coming home late, secretive, distracted with phone calls, missing their son's football games, and Jenna begins smelling perfume. She could not lose it all now .. the house of their dreams, the marriage, their family, and their new business. She thinks he is having an affair; however, he says not, but she does not trust him. She is far too busy worrying about her husband, and has no clue what her daughter is going through.

With the recent death of Jenna's father, now her husband's behavior...how will she deal with this crisis and raise four children? Just when she thinks it can't get worse, he pulls another stunt, which leaves her world spinning—who is this man? Plus, she has to deal with the younger children, acting out not understanding their parents and their family. Now she has to seek an attorney. Where is the money? What happened to the savings, severance, her inheritance? Cheating, lying, stealing, fraud. *How did her life turn into a nightmare?*

To make matters worse, Paige is dealing with her own personal hell-- now her own family is falling apart. The crude, vile comments—who is taking these photos and writing this stuff? Letters in her locker—they would never leave her alone. Another betrayal. Abandoned by her real father, now her stepfather. Paige starts directing her anger at her mom, and inward. She wonders why nothing ever goes right for her --then turns to suicide chat rooms to receive support from others in the same helpless situation.

When Jenna discovers what her daughter has been going through, only when she goes missing, and did now show up for school ---she is frantic, and second guessing herself, how she did not know? She hopes it will not be too late. A race against time to find her daughter, suspense builds, -----leading to the shocking identity of the person doing the bullying, and why?

INTENSE! Lewis does not spare any details with the disturbing, disgusting stalking, and vicious behavior of the teens. Emotions run high, with both Jenna and Paige with their own stresses and drama. They are not there for one another until later.

The book offers insights of a mother with three younger children, a stressful career, a troubled marriage relationship and a teenager. This is a lot of tension. A wake up call to families, parents, and teens, to look for the warning signs. In addition, the book addresses school authorities -- of little help sometimes, and quick to judge as things are not always as they appear, before learning all the facts, or not made aware of the seriousness of the acts. Lives are on the line.

The novel concentrates more on the bullying; the affair, is secondary. At the beginning of the book, Jenna was weak--not a strong personality—she seems very naïve and not abreast of their finances and decisions of the household. Jack very selfish (totally disliked this jerk)— not taking responsibility for his family. He is not a major character in the novel—Mother and daughter, take the limelight.

As the story moves on, Jenna gets stronger, gets angry, fights back (I really starting liking her), by the end of the book-- coming to her daughter's defense, like a mama bear before it is too late. In her personal and professional life. She wants the abuser to pay for their actions. You feel for Paige and keep wanting her to come forward instead of keeping her parents in the dark.

Teen years are hard enough with all the hormones flying, between adolescent and adulthood, without home life issues and bullying. The book demonstrates how deadly this can turn, if not addressed. Serious actions when a person is trying to persuade another to end their life. *Jealousy. Hacking. Manipulation.*

Fans of *Heather Gudenkauf*, *Diane Chamberlain*, *Lisa Jewell*, *Liane Moriarty*, *Amy Hatvany*, and *Jodi Picoult* will enjoy the complexities of modern families and social media. Lewis does a great job with the research. The only thing I would add which would have bumped up the rating another notch--a little more sarcastic humor (from Jenna) to balance out the heavy subject matter *similar to Jo Jo Moyes and Paula Daly*. However, I enjoyed--a nice wrap up. *As always, enjoy Susan's books, and her writing, tackling difficult subjects and relationships.*

An ongoing theme of allowing yourself to become a victim. Both Paige and Jenna were both victims of their circumstances. Triumph over tragedy. "What doesn't kill you, makes you stronger."

“We can’t continue to be a victim, while continuing to allow it, due to fear. We have to report the seriousness of the issues, so it can be stopped by authorities.”

A thought-provoking question: How many kids (abusers) today may be suffering from their own bullying from their parents-- mental, physical, and sexual? They are loose cannons without the proper help from role models, society, educators, and social services. They are helpless victims themselves. *Turning their anger outward.*

I recently read a compelling memoir about another topic, and the author’s words made a big impact. He expresses how critical fiction books are to the overall public audience, to create awareness of social and health issues. It may be too late for some; however, if we can help, or save one person, it is worth it. Preventive. Early Signs. Some people may not read non-fiction---so fiction books addressing these highly-charged topics, with a realistic spin-- puts a spark in your mind. It encourages, empowers, or educates you to become an advocate, join a fight, support a group, continue the research, or a journey.

This holds true with **Too Close To Home**. These issues are closer to home than you may know. Join the fight against bullying. Recognize the signs: *victim and the abuser*. The problem also crosses over to adulthood.

Bullying: Research confirms what many public health practitioners, educators, parents, and children have long known—that bullying is a serious issue facing our nation. Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose. *Kids, parents, educators, community, teens, and friends need to speak out.*

UK: The author reiterates if you are a victim of bullying, or if you know someone who is to ask for help. Anti-bullying Kidscape 020 7730 3300

US & Canada: Bullying can affect you in many ways. You may lose sleep or feel sick. You may want to skip school. You may even be thinking about suicide. If you are feeling hopeless or helpless or know someone that is, please call the LIFELINE at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) Stop Bullying

JDCMustReadBooks

Jane says

Another fantastic book by this author she so makes you think about her characters and how you would cope in the same situation.

Linda Hardy says

If you want to read about family drama then this book is for you, Jenna suspects her husband is having an affair, after he confirms he is and leaves the family, her world starts falling apart, meanwhile her eldest daughter is being bullied at school which eventually leads her to take drastic action and she goes missing, full of emotion, have a read

Fictionophile says

The story of a family whose life seems idyllic... at least at first. Then you begin to notice the cracks in the facade, then the cracks widen to form chasms. Then you fall in.

Set on the beautiful Gower Peninsula in Wales, “Too Close to Home” is the first novel I have ever read by Susan Lewis. If I had to classify it, I would say it was women’s fiction with didactic overtones.

Jenna Moore, suffering from writer’s block, is a published novelist and busy mother of four who has recently moved to Wales from London. Now she lives in her ‘dream house’. She and her husband Jack have started up a new business venture, a company called “Celticulture” which aims to professionally represent aspiring authors and publish their work in electronic format.

Then Jenna begins to suspect that Jack might be having an affair... Changes abound and her world begins to crumble due to the fact that her marriage and the new business are in dire jeopardy.

Paige Moore, the second protagonist, is Jenna’s fifteen year old daughter. She is a beautiful and talented teenager who excels at school. Then – it quickly becomes apparent that Paige is a victim of bullying, both the cyber variety and the up close and personal kind.

The novel accurately and sometimes painfully describes the immense damage that can be created by bullying while simultaneously painting an empathetic portrait of a family in crisis. A crisis which has been precipitated by deception, secrecy, and betrayal. It also perfectly describes the anguish of parents everywhere. The inherent guilt, fear, and worry which accompanies the role.

“Too Close to Home” was rendered with skill. Naturally flowing dialogue coupled with engaging and believable characters made the reader become invested in their outcome. A modern story of a family with modern problems.

I would definitely read another novel by this talented author and look forward to doing so. Recommended!

This review originally posted on the blog: Fictionophile

Karen says

Not what I thought it was about. Was thinking it was a mystery. More of a drama around family and school difficulties. Wasn't a fun book.

Laaiah Connelly says

I had an amazing storyline. There are so many truths about this book it is scary. We as parents can become so consumed with what is going on in our lives that we forget about in the moment we have to be with our children. They may never always be honest with us, but for them to know that we are there and not an after

effect is good. Yes I know that there are parents that do it but get the flack that they are too overly involved. I believe u can never be to overly involved.
Thanks Susan Lewis for a good book

Kristine says

Original review can be found at <http://kristineandterri.blogspot.ca/2...>
3.5 stars

**** I received an advanced readers copy from Ballantine Books via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. Thank you!****

Susan Lewis is not a new author to me. I have had the privilege of reading some of her other work. Too Close to Home was what I would classify as a sweeping family drama. There were multiple things going on with multiple characters within the family that inevitably created or added to one enormous issue that impacted all of them as a whole. There were many issues touched upon in this book with most of them being quite serious. From infidelity and fraud to bullying and suicide, the story was chalked full of relevant topics.

With so many issues, you would think that it would make the story too busy but that was not the case. In fact, I found it was a little slow to take off and catch my interest. This was also something I noticed in some of her previous work. It alternated between Jenna's story and her struggling marriage and Paige's story and the bullying she was receiving at school and on social media. Although both mother and daughter had a lot going on, I found myself drawn more to Paige and the bullying. Perhaps it was because I have daughters her age and I can total relate to the era of social media as it relates to them.

As far as the characters went, my thoughts were all over the place and I struggled a little bit. Jenna did some things that I didn't necessarily approve of. First of all, I found her to be quite naive when it came to Jack. She agreed to a huge move to start a new business that she did not understand at all. Yes she knew the creative side but nothing about the financial and I couldn't grasp that. Also, there were so many questionable moments that I found myself shaking my head at her. What really got me though were some of the things that she said to the kids when Jack left. I understand she was hurting and angry (she had every right to be) but I never approve of pitting one parent against the other. It only serves to hurts the children.

Paige was painted as a strong/smart character but I have to strongly disagree. She was struggling with the extreme bullying that was directed at her and even though she knew what steps she should take, she didn't. She also befriended a person on the Internet with whom she did not know. These situations show naivety and immaturity. She certainly would not be a roll model.

I could go on about things that irritated me about the characters but it was in fact these qualities that made the story what it was. The story could not have happened without those characters flaws. Although I had mixed feelings about the characters I enjoyed the book once I got past the slow beginning. It was a story of one complicated family and the struggles that they had to overcome in order to regain their happy life and family.
