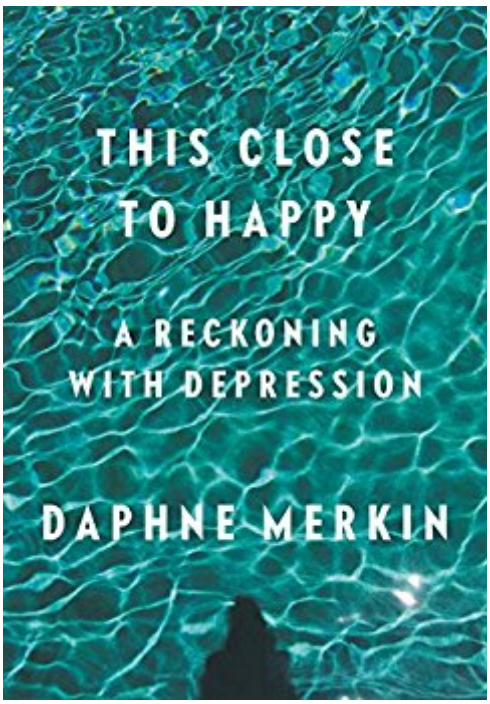
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This Close To Happy: A Reckoning With Depression



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Synopsis

A New York Times Book Review Favorite Read of 2016Ã¢â ¬Å“Despair is always described as dull,Ã¢â ¬Â• writes Daphne Merkin, Ã¢â ¬Å“when the truth is that despair has a light all its own, a lunar glow, the color of mottled silver.Ã¢â ¬Â• This Close to HappyÃ¢â ¬â •MerkinÃ¢â ¬â„¢s rare, vividly personal account of what it feels like to suffer from clinical depressionÃ¢â ¬â •captures this strange light.Daphne Merkin has been hospitalized three times: first, in grade school, for childhood depression; years later, after her daughter was born, for severe postpartum depression; and later still, after her mother died, for obsessive suicidal thinking. Recounting this series of hospitalizations, as well as her visits to myriad therapists and psychopharmacologists, Merkin fearlessly offers what the child psychiatrist Harold Koplewicz calls Ã¢â ¬Å“the inside view of navigating a chronic psychiatric illness to a realistic outcome.Ã¢â ¬Â• The arc of MerkinÃ¢â ¬â„¢s affliction is lifelong, beginning in a childhood largely bereft of love and stretching into the present, where Merkin lives a high-functioning life and her depression is manageable, if not Ã¢â ¬Å“cured.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬Å“The opposite of depression,Ã¢â ¬Â• she writes with characteristic insight, Ã¢â ¬Å“is not a state of unimaginable happiness . . . but a state of relative all-right-ness.Ã¢â ¬Â•In this dark yet vital memoir, Merkin describes not only the harrowing sorrow that she has known all her life, but also her early, redemptive love of reading and gradual emergence as a writer. Written with an acute understanding of the ways in which her condition has evolved as well as affected those around her, This Close to Happy is an utterly candid coming-to-terms with an illness that many share but few talk about, one that remains shrouded in stigma. In the words of the distinguished psychologist Carol Gilligan, Ã¢â ¬Å“It brings a stunningly perceptive voice into the forefront of the conversation about depression, one that is both reassuring and revelatory.Ã¢â ¬Â•

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Brilliant, scathing, heartbreaking and raw. This is the most powerfully honest book on depression and child abuse that I have ever read. Merkin's bereft childhood of brutality and lack seems to be the fertile ground that created her despondency and the tenacious, pervasive longing for suicide. Her parents appear blatantly psychologically disordered, meting out damage as casually as one would order lunch. Merkin is by turns, attached to, and repelled by, a vicious mother, who seems both stunningly narcissistic and psychopathic. I was frustrated by Merkin's struggle to detach from her mother, much in the same way that abused wives return to their abusers, expecting different outcomes. Merkin was drowning in depression, yet repeatedly returned to her parents seeking solace, approval and a revisionist history that neither parent was emotionally equipped to provide. The repeated returns to the abusive environment only seemed to exacerbate the depression and parental control, all in a continuous self-perpetuating loop. I rooted for Merkin to cut the toxic ties in favor of mental health and self actualization, but her journey to contentment was more circuitous. I applaud Merkin's ability to craft riveting and beautiful prose from the wreckage and horror of her early years. This book is both difficult to read at times, and equally hard to put down. My hope is that Merkin never chooses to succumb to the lure of suicide, but instead continues to write, to enjoy simple pleasures and allows herself to heal. A highly recommended read.

ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Lately IÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ve been thinking about the allure of suicide again.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•Now thereÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s a book you donÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t want to read. And Daphne Merkin, the author of that book, understands. Clinical depression, she writes, is a ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“sadness that no one seems to want to talk about in public, not even in this Age of Indiscretion.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•So letÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s start again. With behavior. Your behavior.Ever sleep late, get out of bed, decide thereÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s nothing you want to do

ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â • and return to bed?Ever go to a party, delight others with your wit and charm, and come home feeling like a total loser?Ever feel that sadness and despair sit on your shoulder, like invisible demons that no one but you can see and feel?Many of us feel that wayÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| once in a while. When you feel that way most of the time, youÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢re seriously depressed. ThereÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s nothing romantic about that ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â • Merkin calls it an ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“unexotically normal psychological albatross.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•HereÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s the weird part: All her life Daphne Merkin has been a productive, accomplished writer. She won a poetry prize at Barnard when she was 20, was published in the Times at 21. Her byline has appeared in a million magazines. Her books are highly praised. As is ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“This Close to Happy.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• Sixteen years in the writing, it is a brisk 288 pages of personal revelation and the kind of general perception that gives you information you didnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t know about yourself.Daphne MerkinÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s accomplishments are more impressive when you discover what her childhood was like. She was the fourth of six children, the third girl. Her parents were rich; they lived in a big apartment on Park Avenue. But they didnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t live rich because they were refugees. Her father was remote, and most of her motherÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s family that didnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t die in the Holocaust lived in reduced circumstances in Israel. Her family life was thus a basket of issues. Her mother, Merkin writes, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“was only nice to me when I was sick.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• And she got seriously sick at 8: ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“I was wholly unwilling to attend school, out of some combination of fear and separation anxiety.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• That led to her first hospitalization. There would be more.This was her mother: ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã ËœYour tears donÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t move me,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ sheÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢d tell me repeatedly when I cried as a little girl. And sheÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢d warn, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã ËœYouÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ll feel my five fingers in your face,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ right before slapping me.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• Her nanny was no better. When Daphne fought with her brother, she began ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“banging my head against the wall.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• Decades later, when she rushed home to itell her mother that a piece of fiction sheÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢d written had been accepted by The New Yorker, the response was ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Your nose looks big when you smile.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•And yet her mother ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â • narcissist, tyrant, abuser ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â • is the major character in MerkinÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s life story. And her therapy. And in an all-pervasive unhappiness that makes an early exit appealing: ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“I am fascinated by people who have the temerity to bring down the curtain on their own suffering, who donÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t hang around moping in hopes of a brighter day.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•Are you thinking: ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Get over yourself,

girlfriend. You are rich and privileged and you have a jewel of a daughter and your friends love you.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•You think she doesnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t know that? ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“I know I lead a privileged existence, I know there are people hanging on by a thread in Haiti and the Congo and elsewhere across the globe, I know, I know, I knowÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â¦ But I still canÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t get out of being me.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•And she knows the trouble with therapy; you can understand the past, but you canÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t change it. And the trouble with medication; you can dull the pain, but you canÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t erase it. So whatÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s the point of decades of navel gazing? And the constant adjustment of meds?This is the point: ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“I got a letter from a woman saying, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã ËœHad my sister read your piece, maybe she would have gone to the hospital and not committed suicide.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ I feel like I write for people like this. I hope that doesnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t sound grandiose.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•ItÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s been eight years since her last stint in a hospital. The bookÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s final sentence: ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Whoever thought IÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢d be this close to happy?ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• Hang in, girlfriend.

Great book! Lived up to its hype and then some! Beautifully written, honest, raw and deep. For anyone who also suffers from depression, a must read.

I couldn’t put this book down. The author made the reader feel present throughout her life. I loved the way she expressed herself. There is not a wasted word in this book

Fascinating, insightful, heartbreaking. A sad story beautifully told.

Can’t put it down. Compelling and insightful.

I hate to be critical of a book which took such courage to write ... but ... Its mainly dribble about a bad childhood. When the author speaks to what it is like to feel deep depression she is spot on and I wish more of this insight would have been included.

Thank you Daphne Merkin for this important book! By far the most accurate description of mental illness I have ever read. It is a hard read (so close to home) but the book is also very darkly funny. I laughed and cried.To the author: thank you for letting us into your life and exposing so much of yourself to help others.

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