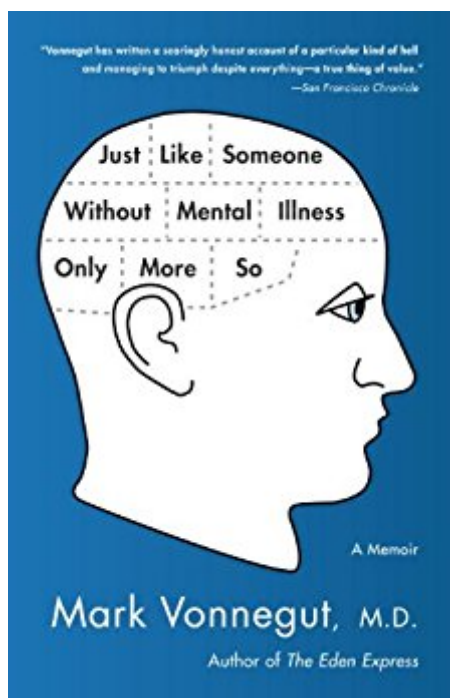


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Just Like Someone Without Mental Illness Only More So: A Memoir



Synopsis

More than thirty years after the publication of his acclaimed memoir *The Eden Express*, Mark Vonnegut continues his story in this searingly funny, iconoclastic account of coping with mental illness, finding his calling, and learning that willpower isn't nearly enough. Here is Mark's life childhood as the son of a struggling writer, as well as the world after Mark was released from a mental hospital. At the late age of twenty-eight and after nineteen rejections, he is finally accepted to Harvard Medical School, where he gains purpose, a life, and some control over his condition. There are the manic episodes, during which he felt burdened with saving the world, juxtaposed against the real-world responsibilities of running a pediatric practice. Ultimately a tribute to the small, daily, and positive parts of a life interrupted by bipolar disorder, *Just Like Someone Without Mental Illness Only More So* is a wise, unsentimental, and inspiring book that will resonate with generations of readers.

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Customer Reviews

Pretty much the sequel to "Eden ...", by the same author, and just as powerful. The impact comes from the matter-of-fact style of memoir writing of a "recovering" mental illness afflicted. I almost used the word "victim", but that would only be appropriate if the afflicted had gone inescapably to his death. This is the first person story of a subject who fumbled and struggled through the baffling onslaught of images and impulses of a mind going off the rails, and with the imperfect help of friends and mental health professionals gained day-to-day control of a potentially crippling and deadly mental disease. Clearly he had the advantage of a favorable social and economic situation, but in my opinion he has done a laudable job of making a worthwhile career to this point in time, and I wish him continuing success. Dr. Vonnegut in his continuing role as a pediatrician devotes a considerable amount of exposition about his medical practice to describing the eccentricities of pediatrics as well as a discussion of the inefficiencies and obstructions of the current American healthcare system which is driven by insurance restrictions and complexity. This portion of the book alone is worthwhile reading as a candid chronicling of this controversial, costly and frustrating system we all must deal with.

What I like most about this book is Vonnegut's down-to-earth brilliance, which seems anything but brilliant. His gift with words makes it feel as though you're chatting with a good friend in a coffee shop. This friend is so reasonable and compassionate, you can't help but consume his every word, easily agreeing with it. You also can't help but wish he'd been your, or your children or grandchildren's, pediatrician. What I also like is that Mark is the Vonnegut whose reading I choose. It's more accessible, less insane to me, than his father's. This one will change your thinking about mental health, the medical profession, and - perhaps - the world's greatest author whose son shines brightly under the radar.

Kurt Vonnegut's son, telling his own story of mental illness with bipolar disorder. He eventually goes on to Harvard Med, becomes a pediatrician, and finds purpose in his life. Interesting just because of the story, and his famous father, it holds the reader, but not because of the coherence of the writing, I believe you get a true sense of the burden of the illness, but you can get that in other books. Mark writes with an ironic tone, and nevertheless makes it through medical school and into a practice benefiting society. This is enough to give hope to others with bipolar, but his particular set of circumstances is his own. At some months after I read this, I have only a spotty sense of the book, so it didn't stick.

An interesting, but not captivating account of Mark Vonnegut's struggle with bipolar disorder. Perhaps the nature of his psychotic breakdowns was just too hard to describe, but I felt like there was more to learn. I was specifically hopeful to better understand the relationship between bipolar episodes and schizophrenia, which I thought were two completely different things. It's a good book, but only skims the surface.

Few outside the mental health profession who do not have a close friend or family member with bipolar illness actually have any idea of what this condition is. Dr. Mark Vonnegut, a pediatrician based in Massachusetts, is an individual who has bipolar illness, (formerly known as manic depression) and through Mark Vonnegut's eyes, the reader comes to understand that with the right management, this often-crippling condition can enable a person to have a family and a career to live a fulfilling, happy functional life. Those who love Kurt Vonnegut's novels will enjoy this peek at the Vonnegut family history, and in particular, snippets about Mark's life and about his parents, and particularly on Kurt Vonnegut's intense, post-traumatic WWII stress. I saw *Slaughterhouse Five* again after first reading this book in 2011, and fully understood how earlier impressions of *Slaughterhouse Five* in the 70s failed to do the novel justice, as SF is actually a story about war and post-traumatic stress and that it became a cult classic by virtue of its popular appeal, which ironically did not do the novel justice. Aside from Mark's bipolar illness, growing up with someone who experienced the horrific level of trauma that Mark Vonnegut did in the WWII theatres he participated in, is also extremely stressful, and this reader cannot imagine the toll this took on Kurt Vonnegut's life, at a time when little attention was paid to PTSD. Mark Vonnegut's memoir is a fascinating and gripping story, is humanely written and brightens a reader's perspective on bipolar illness. This is a very important book for anyone to read, particularly anybody who has ever known anyone who has bipolar illness, as it sheds light on the all-too-often dark (and hidden) shadows of mental conditions.

An excellent book that will give hope to those with mental illness that life can be more than just trying to stay well. Also worthwhile in the field of substance abuse as he proves to himself that he is an alcoholic without trying. Maybe it will help those who don't claim mental illness as part of their dossier, realize that the mentally ill can contribute as well. And those who do have mental illness as part of their life, may find that a person doesn't have to be defined by it.

I loved this book. The author's writing style is full of pithy punchlines that made me laugh out loud.

His direct candor about living with mental illness is fascinating. I admire the author's bravery and I think his truth will help other people.

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