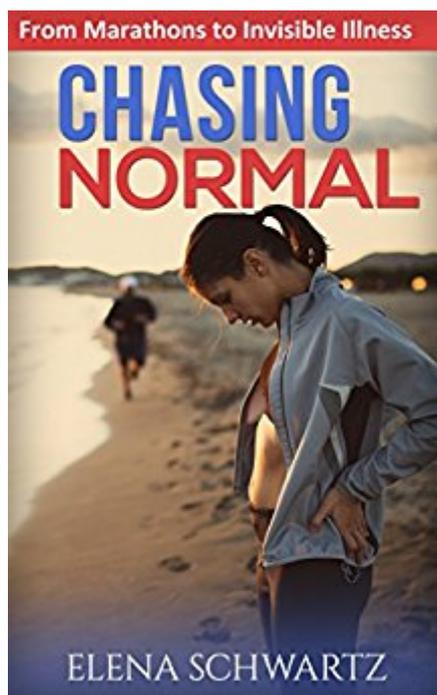


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# Chasing Normal: From Marathons To Invisible Illness



## Synopsis

Have you ever hit rock bottom? That place where all your worst fears come true, and somehow you are still alive? I knew as long as I could exercise, I could make it through anything. No matter how tough the challenge. But what happens when I could no longer exercise? What happens when I can no longer follow my path to be a surgeon because I can't stand for more than seven minutes without passing out? What happens when any type of physical activity makes me pass out? Imagine, one day you are able to do a 50-mile bike ride, and the next you can no longer stand up right. That is what dysautonomia did to me. This powerful and enlightening book will take you on the journey of a perfectionist marathon runner that develops a chronic illness that will change her life forever. See the choices she must make, the adversity she must face, and the strength it takes to make it through each day. Written by the patient herself, you will get an inside look at how chronic illness turns the lives of successful, young adults upside down. This book will show you: -How hard working individuals are broken by chronic illness. -The adversity people face when they have an illness yet look healthy. - How little awareness of invisible disabilities like dysautonomia causes patients problems in everyday life. -The problems with our conventional treatment of chronic conditions. - How invisible illness often causes mental illness, including anxiety and depression. -The positives that can come out of invisible illness. -How you can help people with chronic illness without changing your everyday life. Together, we can make the lives of people with invisible, chronic illness just a little bit easier. Scroll to the top and click the "buy now" button.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Ms Schwartz shares her journey of her invisible illnesses (POTS) and asks us to be thankful, kind and spread the word to support those who are trying to live their lives on a daily basis. Ms. Schwartz points out that knowledge is a big deal and by helping her spread the word of kindness and acceptance for invisible illness research. Her goal is to help those who are suffering in silence, in the future, not have years of struggle for help and acceptance. Ms Schwartz's writing style is engaging and thought provoking. She offers awesome support and I found her chapter on New Normal to be especially helpful.

Jabs at perceived invincibility aside, most teens and young adults do expect that they will fall ill or succumb to injury at some point. However, at an age when careers are decided and crushes lead to woody engagement photos by the hundred, few probably imagine their immediate future holding anything more serious than a torn ACL or catching the stomach flu that is going around the dorm. But what happens when you get sick and never recover, your aspirations for a particular future fall around you, and no one can even see that you are sick? With both grace and humor, Schwartz uses "Chasing Normal" to explore the double sting of lost abilities and private suffering that chronic invisible illnesses bestow upon their subjects. "Chasing Normal" is an informal memoir recounting Schwartz's diagnostic odyssey and the myriad ways in which her new diagnosis changes her life. Although she is diagnosed with a form of dysautonomia called postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome (POTS), her story likely mirrors experiences of individuals with a variety of other invisible illnesses. One of the best features of the book is Schwartz's down-to-earth style, which is at times comedic and never invites pity. It's as if the author has invited her readers to sit down and hear her story over a glass of sweet tea, and I found myself laughing in one paragraph and sobered in the next. Schwartz seems willing to do anything

within reason to retain her independence, which lends credence to her claims that there is a physical cause for her symptoms. Overall, her style is both entertaining and appropriate for her serious subject matter. Having had POTS for nearly half of my life, I can confirm that many of her descriptions of what it is like to have an invisible illness are spot on. However, one complexity to consider is that Schwartz has had the condition for less than two years, and if there is a negative about the memoir, it is that it may be too soon after her diagnosis to have a more global view of the medical community's awareness of POTS. She repeatedly generalizes about the ignorance of doctors towards dysautonomia, yet I have found a primary care physician who is very well-versed in POTS, and I even saw an orthodontist who asked if I was okay to recline in the dental chair after reading POTS in my history. On the other hand, I once saw an electrophysiologist at a top hospital who verbally confirmed my preexisting POTS diagnosis and yet wrote "primary palpitations" as a diagnosis in my medical record. I can certainly empathize with the frustration she has felt with Western medicine, and imagine that every person with POTS has had very similar negative experiences, but it may be that her anger is tempered over time by positive encounters with well-informed doctors. Although her current passion lacks subtlety and makes parts of the book stylistically choppy, hopefully this book is a first step in converting her disappointment with medicine into advocacy for dysautonomia awareness. Overall, though, Schwartz shows surprising strength and maturity for dealing with the illness for a relatively short period of time. It is a delicate balance to accept that something like marathon running may be permanently out of reach, yet to not entirely lose hope that one day her condition might improve. She accepts that POTS is life altering and admits to feeling guilt, yet strives to live her life in a way that is as fulfilling as possible. I recommend this book to fellow individuals with POTS and other invisible illnesses, so they can know that they are not alone in their daily battles. I recommend this book to the friends and families of those with invisible illnesses, so they can learn the value of their unconditional love and support. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I recommend this book to those who have never heard of POTS or invisible illnesses. A little more empathy and understanding for those with serious, unobservable conditions will go a long way.

It is difficult to fight for acceptance even consideration of the invisible. I can identify with the frustration of the author as I suffered from weight issues and the ignorance of the general public judged me as lazy and indulgent even though it can be many things including disease that needs treatment. Read this book if you care and want to understand.

This book is an autobiography of a former marathon runner's struggle with invisible illness. While debilitating at times for her, many of the people in her life (included in which are her parents and the medical professionals she saw) believed that she was just making it up. It is this point that is very much a large emotional theme in the work, the definition of family. While Schwartz's parents seemed to be largely inconvenienced and refused to think anything was wrong with their daughter, her friends and husband were with her every step of the way without much, if any, complaining. Another interesting takeaway from this is how much some doctors still have left to learn, even in an era with extremely advanced technology and medical practices. This is evidenced by doctors ranging from knowing an answer that wasn't correct, not knowing the answer at all, or also believing that it's all in her head. Ultimately, this book uses a very real and debilitating medical condition to discuss emotional and personal struggles, as both themes almost always affect each other. The work is very well put together and reads really smoothly. Before I even realized it, I had read the first thirty pages before I even looked away from my screen. I would definitely recommend *Chasing Normal* to anyone combating an invisible illness, anyone who knows someone with an invisible illness, or anyone who has ever been told "you're faking/making it up" or "it's all in your head." The feeling of pure frustration and dread when facing those words is something to which many can relate, and reading Elena Schwartz's firsthand account of an ongoing instance of this is pretty eye opening.

One woman's struggle with finding her new 'normal' while dealing with one of the myriad of invisible diseases in our world. As the daughter of a Mom with ME/CFS I recall in detail the day it first hit while we were on her first overseas excursion. Life has never been the same. At 82, to be dealing with this disease, is unfair. I hope that for Elena Schwartz, who tells her tale of living with her disease with clarity....with humor...that there may be some medical recognition and help before she reaches her senior years. Thank you for sharing your story, Elena. The more the world hears of these diseases, the better understanding we can have and, God willing, the more research within the medical community.

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