



This Close to Happy: A Reckoning with Depression

Daphne Merkin

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A *New York Times* Book Review Favorite Read of 2016

A gifted and audacious writer confronts her lifelong battle with depression and her search for release

This Close to Happy is the rare, vividly personal account of what it feels like to suffer from clinical depression, written from a woman's perspective and informed by an acute understanding of the implications of this disease over a lifetime.

Taking off from essays on depression she has written for *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times Magazine*, Daphne Merkin casts her eye back to her beginnings to try to sort out the root causes of her affliction. She recounts the travails of growing up in a large, affluent family where there was a paucity of love and of basics such as food and clothing despite the presence of a chauffeur and a cook. She goes on to recount her early hospitalization for depression in poignant detail, as well as her complex relationship with her mercurial, withholding mother.

Along the way Merkin also discusses her early, redemptive love of reading and gradual emergence as a writer. She eventually marries, has a child, and suffers severe postpartum depression, for which she is again hospitalized. Merkin also discusses her visits to various therapists and psychopharmacologists, which enables her to probe the causes of depression and its various treatments. The book ends in the present, where the writer has learned how to navigate her depression, if not "cure" it, after a third hospitalization in the wake of her mother's death.

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