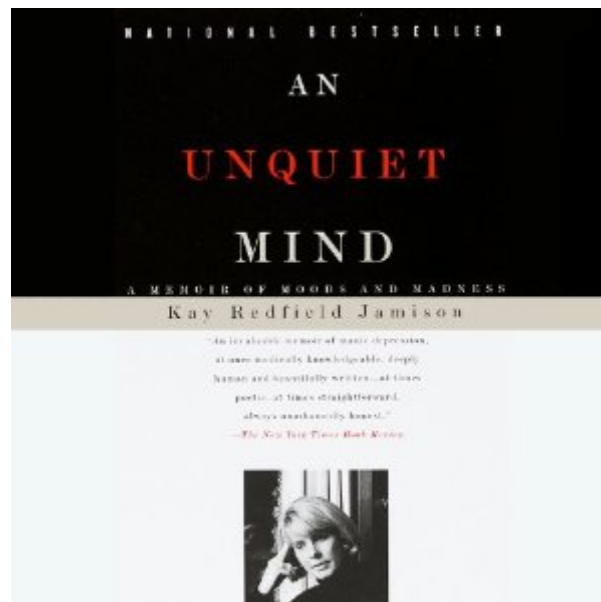


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# An Unquiet Mind



## Synopsis

This work is a personal testimony from Kay Redfield Jamison: the revelation of her struggle with manic depression since adolescence, and how it has shaped her life. The book follows her through college, a love affair, her battle with the illness, bouts of madness, violence and attempted suicide.

--This text refers to the Paperback edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Over the past 20 years I've had several friends who suffered from manic-depressive illnesses. It's abundantly clear to me that the disease is primarily biochemical and "not their fault." But I had trouble understanding why these people refused to take their medication (or stopped taking it after they started) and otherwise engaged in massive denial. Jamison's frank and well-written book was a revelation: now I feel I have a better sense of the seductiveness of mania, and why creative, intelligent people are often willing to risk the lows of their illness for the sake of the highs. As Jamison points out emphatically, however, the long-term effects of bipolar disorder can be devastating mentally and physically (not to mention the financial and personal fallout) -- hence her crusade to understand the basis of the illness, and learn how to fine-tune the medication so that the sufferer achieves equilibrium without deadening the sensitivity and creativity that often accompany this disease. I'd already read "Night Falls Fast," which is also excellent, but this book set out the personal story behind Jamison's research interests. While she insists that love alone won't cure the disease, it's also clear that, without the love of her loyal friends, this intelligent, talented, and articulate woman might never have made it through the more difficult years, let alone become a

respected authority in her profession. Anyone who suffers from bipolar disorders, and those who love them, should read this book.

What's it like to have an incurable, but manageable disease? One that changes your perceptions of the world around you, loosens your inhibitions or cripples your ability to do anything? Kay Redfield Jamison pours out her experience of living with a mood disorder, using descriptive, image-evoking prose. This book contains her life story, told from the point, not just of a disease sufferer, but also from the standpoint of a healer. Dr. Jamison is both. As a psychotherapist & professor of psychiatry, not only did she write a definitive book on the treatment of manic-depressive illness, but she also suffers from the disease herself. We read her first-person account of how the disease snuck into her life. How parts of it were seductive and alluring, how she enjoyed having the extra energy, the industry; but also how that energy would turn to mania, would be damaging. Then we learn how dark, how bleak the downs could be. She exposes her struggle with medication, how she felt it limited her, how difficult it was to find and maintain the correct dose. We learn about the impact of her disease on her relationships. She examines the path of manic-depressive illness in her life and paints a picture for the reader. One cannot put this book down without being touched. If you, or somebody you know, suffers from a mood disorder, this book is =REQUIRED= reading. If you would like a deep insightful read, not only will you enjoy this book, but you'll come away from it with a new appreciation for living with a chemically balanced brain.

Upon reading all of the reviews for this book, so far, it surprised me by the number of 1-2 ratings. It appeared that readers weren't very much in the middle; they either loved or disliked it. One of the most common comments pertained to the fact that it was KRJ's personal story. Readers seemed to expect more medical, scientific, and technical material. Please keep in mind that the subtitle to this book is 'A memoir of moods and madness' A MEMOIR. If the reader needs more medical information, they should seek the guidance of that kind of read, psychiatrist, or physician. I thought KRJ did a wonderful job in describing her life with manic depression. Being diagnosed, myself, last year, I needed someone to be this honest and this personal. KRJ succeeded in sharing this information. Of course, she doesn't make her life seem ordinary and "down to earth" (as was another complaint by some readers) because it wasn't/isn't an ordinary life. KRJ has had notable accomplishments. Not everyone is a PH.D in their field, not everyone has seen far-away lands. I think her story is well told and well thought. I could identify with her descriptions and memories. Her words, people complained, made m.d. seem glamorous and beautiful. To that I say, if you've ever

been manic, it can be a beautiful experience. It can be seductive and a whirlwind of wonderful feelings. Just keep in mind that everyone with this disorder has different trials and triumphs and emotions that go with them. I applaud her strength and her will. And, I give thanks to her honesty and straightforward style. Chris...museindenver@yahoo.com

I picked up a copy of this book at an airport bookstore on my way to a job interview. I typically never read autobiographies or memoirs, but the title of this "An Unquiet Mind" resonated so perfectly with the type of hypomania that I experience. I had just been diagnosed and was (am still) dealing with the stigma, questioning, repercussions, misunderstandings, explanations, etc. This book, written by an authority with both clinical and personal knowledge of manic depression, gave me a better understanding of my own condition, as well as the means to educate others (friends, family) who can't grasp that what they thought was me is actually my illness. Jamison's is the best book I have found to date that can provide insight into the lived experience of both mania and depression. I recommend it to anyone in the field of mental health, as well as to those of us diagnosed bipolar and our families and friends. This is definitely crucial reading to develop an understanding of this devastating disorder.

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