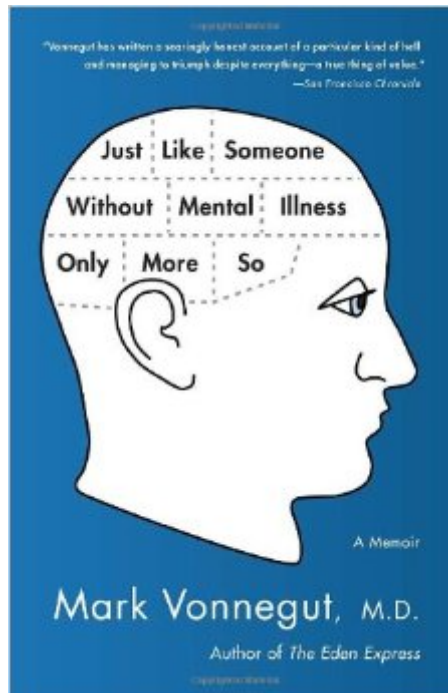


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Just Like Someone Without Mental Illness Only More So: A Memoir



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.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Mark Vonnegut, son of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., first wrote about his struggle with mental illness in *The Eden Express*. His newest book has an updated focus, written from a seasoned perspective, with doses of humor which make the book very engaging. To get a fuller perspective about how the newer volume fits into Mark's life, I'd strongly suggest reading *The Eden Express* first. No, it isn't necessary, but does add perspective and a historical comparison between views about mental health in the 70s and now. It also makes it easier to grasp Vonnegut's changed views of mental health diagnosis and treatment. By Mark Vonnegut's own admission, "craziness" ran in his family

and manic depression affected at least four generations of the Vonneguts - and maybe even more. Alcoholism also seemed to be a common theme, with his great-grandfather drinking when he needed to escape from the voices he heard in his head. His maternal grandmother went through periods of psychiatric hospitalization. When he wrote *The Eden Express*, Mark believed he had schizophrenia and was even formally diagnosed as schizophrenic. But he later decided that he actually had a form of bipolar illness, characterized by periods of mania as well as depression. Perhaps that is the prime reason his new book has more of an emphasis on bipolar illness. Vonnegut now questions the vitamin therapy which he credited in *The Eden Express* for much of his recovery. He has revisited that treatment option, noting it didn't work for many others. Having read *The Eden Express*, I was eager to find out what had happened to Mark Vonnegut in the years since its publication. As it turns out, he'd not only gone to Harvard Medical School but became a practicing physician, all described in detail in his latest work.

This book will make you smile, smirk, chuckle and laugh out loud. It will also make you wince, perhaps in recognition, but certainly in sympathy. Because Mark Vonnegut's road to finding some measure of peace in his sixty-three years of life has been filled with bumps, collisions and countless stretches of "under construction." One would think that being the son of a famous author like Kurt Vonnegut would have made for an easy and charmed life. Nope. As it turns out mental illness ran in Vonnegut's family on both sides probably back three or four generations. With a family history like that, it's not surprising that Mark Vonnegut cracked up in his early twenties, the first of at least four major episodes in his life which each time left him hospitalized and scrambling to find purchase on a sudden downward slide. The last time it happened, Vonnegut had reconstructed his life well enough to have gotten into Harvard Med School and had successfully completed an internship and residency and was already well established as one of the top pediatricians in the Boston area. Alcohol and prescription drugs (Xanax) played a part, and denial played perhaps an even bigger role. Mark Vonnegut has written only one other book, a memoir 35 years ago. *The Eden Express*, an insider's tale of mental illness, was a smashing success, enough to finance the author's med school and buy him a house. I must have read the book, probably soon after it came out, because my brother said I lent it to him years ago. But I can't remember it at all, so I'll have to find a copy and read it again. Since I'm a few years older than Mark Vonnegut, I guess I'll just chalk my forgetfulness up to age. Because I love this new book.

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