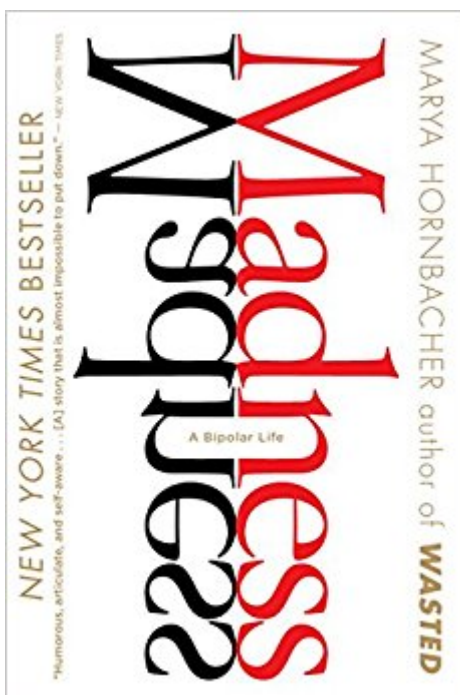


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# Madness: A Bipolar Life



## Synopsis

An astonishing dispatch from inside the belly of bipolar disorder, reflecting major new insights. When Marya Hornbacher published her first book, *Wasted: A Memoir of Anorexia and Bulimia*, she did not yet have the piece of shattering knowledge that would finally make sense of the chaos of her life. At age twenty-four, Hornbacher was diagnosed with Type I rapid-cycle bipolar, the most severe form of bipolar disorder. In *Madness*, in her trademark wry and utterly self-revealing voice, Hornbacher tells her new story. Through scenes of astonishing visceral and emotional power, she takes us inside her own desperate attempts to counteract violently careening mood swings by self-starvation, substance abuse, numbing sex, and self-mutilation. How Hornbacher fights her way up from a madness that all but destroys her, and what it is like to live in a difficult and sometimes beautiful life and marriage -- where bipolar always beckons -- is at the center of this brave and heart-stopping memoir. *Madness* delivers the revelation that Hornbacher is not alone: millions of people in America today are struggling with a variety of disorders that may disguise their bipolar disease. And Hornbacher's fiercely self-aware portrait of her own bipolar as early as age four will powerfully change, too, the current debate on whether bipolar in children actually exists. Ten years after Kay Redfield Jamison's *An Unquiet Mind*, this storm of a memoir will revolutionize our understanding of bipolar disorder.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Hornbacher, who detailed her struggle with bulimia and anorexia in *Wasted*, now shares the story of her lifelong battle with mental illness, finally diagnosed as rapid cycling type 1 bipolar disorder. Even

as a toddler, Hornbacher couldn't sleep at night and jabbered endlessly, trying to talk her parents into going outside to play in the dark. Other schoolchildren called her crazy. When she was just 10, she discovered alcohol was a good mood stabilizer; by age 14, she was trading sex for pills. In her late teens, her eating disorder landed her in the hospital, followed by another body obsession, cutting. An alcoholic by this point, she was alternating between mania and depression, with frequent hospitalizations. Her doctor explained that not only did the alcohol block her medications, it was up to her to control her mental illness, which would always be with her. This truth didn't sink in for a long, long time, but when it did, she had a chance for a life outside her local hospital's psychiatric unit. Hornbacher ends on a cautiously optimistic note—she knows she'll never lead a normal life, but maybe she could live with the life she does have. Although painfully self-absorbed, Hornbacher will touch a nerve with readers struggling to cope with mental illness. (Apr.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Like a horror-movie sequence that threatens never to end, Hornbacher's testimony grabs and doesn't let go through episode after episode of bulimia, substance abuse, and promiscuity. Mania with its attendant voices plagued Hornbacher ever since she can remember. Extreme mood swings finally led to diagnosis at 24 of bipolarity. Possibly genetic, given a family history rife with anecdotes implying mental instability going back for generations, Hornbacher's bipolar disorder is a label she initially rejected, though she responded to medication for it. She married, and threw herself into overworking that triggered recurrences of the mood swings, two years of repeated hospitalization, then electroconvulsive therapy. With cutting perception and skill, she makes palpable not only madness' losses but the things gained as well. --Whitney Scott --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book was important to me in nursing a broken heart as I had dated a bipolar man for two years and eventually we broke up due to his abrupt and extreme mood changes and his substance usage. I know that bipolar is a difficult diagnosis to have but I didn't realize the full reality of what it meant until coming upon this book. My boyfriend used to get so angry at me for walking slow, driving slow (the speed limit), or not doing anything up to his speed. In the book, the author explains that when she was in manic phase, EVERYONE seemed slow and it was excruciating to her to tolerate her perceived "slowness" of others as the thoughts inside her head were moving in warp speed. When my boyfriend was in his depressed stage he would literally disappear, not answer the phone, not

talk to me, and drink. The author explains how devastating the depressive cycle was to her and how impossible it was to get up out of bed during this time, in fact she would use cocaine to get her going. She explains the relationship of the manic depressive cycles to substance usage. At times I would try to talk to my boyfriend about his "cycles" which were predictable and he would stare at me and act like he didn't know what I was talking about, which I couldn't believe, since it seemed so obvious. But in this book, the author explains her surprise as an adult when a psychologist asked her about how fast she cycled (changed moods) and she didn't know what he was talking about. To her, the moods were random and came and went without explanation. In fact the psychologist had to explain to her what a "cycle" was. She was so unaware about herself. At the end of our relationship, my boyfriend found another woman in less than a month's time which truly hurt my feelings, and yet the author also reveals that after the breakup of her marriage she had found a new husband and moved across country in less than a month. Impulsivity, another aspect of bipolar manic phase. Reading this revealing autobiography helped me to understand what demons my ex boyfriend was wrestling with and helped to heal some of my hurts that I had taken his behaviors personally and realized it wasn't like that. This book will not save our relationship as me and my ex have both moved on, but I applaud the author for her candid writing about a mental state that affects many of the most creative and loving people. It will also help me know ahead of time what I might be getting into should I ever be attracted to a man with bipolar again, which I actually don't think will happen, unless he is willing to take medication to treat it, which my ex expressed he did not want to do. Still, I think this is a good book to help understand friends and loved ones. I recommend it.

There are literally a 100 reviews on *Madness*; so I'll make this short(ish). I insist that anyone who is important in my life and who I want to be in my life for a significant amount of time read this book. Literarily it's beautiful. Emotionally it's powerful. And for anyone who has a bit or a lot of madness in their life, it's a beautifully honest way to share with others how life feels when you're in the thick of it. For myself, a significant aspect that not many other accounts share is the longterm. The longterm is often only addressed in stiff gloomy how-to reference books, usually geared towards how to survive living with a loved one with bi-polar. Most of which reference a future without hope. *Madness* addresses those of us who recognize that we have a lifetime and a lifelong battle ahead of us (not only behind us) with a realistic courage and strength. Also, several other memoirs or accounts of people with bi-polar have left me feeling as though I haven't accomplished anything with my life; "Look at all they did and their bi-polar is much more severe and debilitating than mine, I can't even...." I finished reading *Madness* (each time) able to recognize my accomplishments and feeling

positive that I will make many more! I have never recommended another book as much as I have Madness!

A close friend of mine with bipolar strongly urged me to read this. I had been diagnosed in 2008 with no clear understanding of the disorder. I was given some medication, a few therapy sessions and then sent on my way. It was like being handed a set of car keys without ever being taught how to drive. After reading this book, I now have a much clearer understanding of the disorder than ever before as well as how it affects me, and my relationships with others.

I read *Wasted* years ago and found it to be a very eye-opening and honestly written account of eating disorders and the control that they exert over their victim's lives. It is so sad that Ms. Hornbacher had to suffer from Bi-Polar disorder in addition to her eating disorders. But, as readers, we benefit from her candid and thoughtful insight into her ongoing mental illness. For anyone who has ever known a friend or family member who suffers from mental illness, this is a must read.

Eye opening. One of my in-laws suffers from this. He is in his 70's and doesn't take his meds as he should. I have developed a better awareness of his perception of the world because of this book. This was an education. The courage to put herself out there as the author did was heroic. The book was engrossing, terrifying, heart-breaking, and full of hope. I highly recommend it!

Marya Hornbacher, you not only gave words but wings to some of my own thoughts and feelings as one who has lived with bipolar disorder. It's not easy to express many of those same thoughts and feelings but you did, clearly and concisely, bravely and with clarity. Thank you for taking the time and energy to write your story of madness. It encourages me to pen my own.

I bought this book based on my own recent Bipolar diagnosis. Although I was diagnosed with Type II, or soft bipolar illness (mostly depression, not a lot of mania, this book helped me see my clinical symptoms more clearly. Marya expresses the difficulty of living life with rapid mood changes, many medicinal changes & side effects. I would recommend this book as insightful & informative to any newly diagnosed bipolar patient or family member of a bipolar patient. Although a bit redundant at times, I could see myself in a lot of Marya's experiences which has helped me come to grips with my mental disorder.

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