

Climates of the Mind: A Bipolar Memory Including the Therapy Journals

Jerry Jewler

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Jerry Jewler celebrated his sixtieth birthday with a “lollapalooza of an evening,” only to awaken to “hell” the following morning. Hell wasn’t a hangover. It was an epic psychological attack and a tumble into a depressive state that were part of an illness he soon learned had plagued him all his life. By sharing his experiences, Jewler teaches readers that achieving success is possible for those with bipolar disorder.

No compassionate person enjoys stories of pain suffered by others. However, memoirs like *Climates of the Mind* can be instructive. A good portion of the book is comprised of excerpts from the author’s therapy journals. Jewler shares his experiences living through his diagnosis and also offers what he sees as the positive aspects of his life at the end of the text. This memoir will be valuable to people confronting bipolar disorder, if only as an illustration that their condition isn’t unique and is, indeed, manageable. It might also be helpful to those who have someone in their lives suffering from this condition.

Jewler believes the bipolar gene is hereditary, and he relates stories from his childhood and of his grandmother Sarah to illustrate this point. The author has lived a productive and influential life even though he has felt forever trapped by imbalance and feelings of insecurity. For example, he was unable to feel enthusiasm and pride in his work or celebrate his ability to co-write a textbook that he says is earning substantial royalties. Even at the time of writing his memoir, Jewler offers a poignant thought about his wife and marriage: “One of the hardest things in my life these days is trying to make Belle happy.” Jewler’s dedication to living the best life possible is evidenced by the fact that his marriage has lasted more than a half-century, despite his bipolar disorder and other major challenges. The marriage also produced two children who grew up to be successful adults and who have prospered “despite growing up in an often-unstable household.”

Lacking an index of resources or guidelines for understanding the need for help, *Climates of the Mind* isn’t a medical how-to manual. But Jewler’s insight and advice make the book a worthy read. If readers approach Jewler’s memoir with the understanding that it is offered from a certain perspective—that of a person suffering from bipolar disorder himself—it will be easy for them to take from it important lessons.

GARY PRESLEY (March 26, 2012)

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