



Passing for Normal: A Memoir of Compulsion

Amy S. Wilensky

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"What I remember even more distinctly than the incidents of cruelty and confusion, intolerance and avoidance--more vividly than standing in front of the mirror watching my head move with no conscious instruction from me--is the strain of trying to conceal my tics and rituals from others, especially those closest to me, my own family most of all."

The provocative memoir of a young woman's struggle to come to terms with a life plagued by irrational behavior.

I am crazy. But maybe I am not. For most of her life, this thought haunted Amy Wilensky as she watched her body do things she couldn't control, repeatedly twitching and contorting into awkward positions. Her mind lurched and veered in ways she didn't understand: She felt that she must touch wood at all times to ward off harm, that chewing a wad of stale gum would prevent a plane crash. Why couldn't she throw away meaningless scraps of paper? Why were six-word sentences strangely satisfying?

While Amy excelled in school and led an otherwise "normal" life, she worried that beneath the surface she was a freak, that there was something irrevocably wrong with her. It wasn't until she happened upon the book **The Boy Who Couldn't Stop Washing** after graduating from college that she realized she might be among the approximately 5 million Americans afflicted with Tourette's syndrome and obsessive-compulsive disorder.

Passing for Normal is Amy's emotionally charged account of her lifelong struggle with these often misunderstood disorders. A powerful witness to her own dysfunction, she describes the strain it bore on her relationships with the people she thought she knew best: her family, her friends, and her self. Confronting the labels we apply to ourselves and others--compulsive, crazy, out of control--Amy describes her symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment with courage and a healthy dose of humor, gradually coming to terms with the absurdities of a life beset by irrational behavior. This compelling narrative, by turns tragic and comic, broadly extends our understanding of the wondrously complex human mind, and, with subtlety and grace, challenges our notion of what it is to be "normal."

From the Hardcover edition.



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