

An Unquiet Mind A Memoir of Moods and Madness

Instructor

Subject

Date

The Book an Unquiet Mind, is a story about the experience of the Author, Kay Redfield Jamison as she undergoes manic depression. It chronicles the symptoms of such illness and how this had affected he personal and professional life and dealings. It allows the reader to journey with her as she faces the different challenges and euphoria that she became accustomed to because of the doings of her mind. The reader is taken to the humorous and at the same time ill fated turns of the events when her greatest alliance, her mind becomes her worst enemy. She showed how during the course of the sickness, she fails to remedy it because of fear of losing such exuberating feeling.

“ The intensity, glory and absolute assuredness of mind’s plight make it difficult for me to believe, once I was better, that the illness was one I should willingly give up”

Dr. Jamison preferred the term Manic depression instead on “bipolar disorder”. Anyone who suffers such an illness is characterized by the presence of different moods at heightened levels. It shows the energy and effortless seductive well being and confidence of one who is considered as hypomania. It also at times show the frenzies brought about by the over-the-edge thinking of an individual. As one continues to read on, one is given the opportunity to give in to the frightening world of bloodied hallucinations. One would now understand the obsession of the author on death. The book also was able to recount the pressures and the logical reasoning that she had given to get away with a suicidal attempt.

Dr. Kay Jamison is currently a professor of Psychiatry in the John Hopkins School of Medicine. She was born in a middle class family. She was fortunate to have affluent parents.

She is intelligence and she has confidence in all her abilities.

This novel was presented in chronological order. She traced the roots of her manic depression back to her childhood days. She recalls that at a very young age, everything around her excites her. Even this early, she was very conscious that these feelings are more than what is expected from someone faced with the same situation. She felt differently about the things that wound her, a mixed of highlighted wonder and joy. She appreciated all the things that is within her reach, its beauty and sounds at a much higher degree than anyone she knows. As she gets older, she had started experiencing the thrill and excitement of everything which later on leads her to succumb in exhaustion. This experience paved way to her eventual fall to the world of depression. She then notices her similarity with her father and older sister in their “darkening moods”

The sudden change of moods persists as she enters her undergraduate and graduate studies. This bipolar disorder is further evident during the times that she tries to comply with her school work. She showed staggering energy and at the same time a foray of sadness that lasts all night long during study session. Her greatest fear during this time is the feeling of loosing control that may lead to her insanity.

In the 1970's, only lithium was believed to relieve this madness and allows the patient to go back to her sanity. At first, Kay was rather obedient and decisive in making herself better. But the thrill of experiencing what she had consumed her, that what others believe as a better judgment became unappealing to her. As she aptly had written in her book:

“ What normal mind can fly past Saturn and its moons... When you have the stars at your feet and the rings of Saturn though your hands... it is difficult to blend into a three-piece suit”

She then continue her practice, treating patients who needs different psychiatric assessment and treatments, including those who suffer the same manic depression. The sudden outpour of ideas and insights is very astounding. It surprises her colleagues and at times ever herself. She became very productive. She was able to answer questions at a very fast pace. She cooks in some new ideas that she believes needs all her attention, all at the same time. She was even able to interpret flawlessly a poem that she remembered having reading in the past. During those time, its meaning was quite vague but with her current situation, she was able to unearth its mystery and connotations. With this, comes a more frequent change in moods, from the super high to the extreme low. As more struggles are encountered as the days move on, she also experienced financial troubles and even losing her “clinical privileges”.

The mood swings also led to the ending of her first marriage. Her first husband, in spite of all the understanding and support that he had extended, still was not enough for him to completely accept the situation at hand. After him, two other loves came her way.

She came to a point however when it was difficult for her to handle her state of mind. She came to a point where her thoughts were clouded with ending her life as it is. She had several suicidal attempts that consumed her being because she believed that it is her only way out in the insanity that she is experiencing. She finds it difficult to open up with her colleagues because she is very much aware that some accepts her illness negatively. Some were jealous of her remarkable flow of intelligence. Others however were empathetic in her condition. They offer their understanding and support that somehow surprised even her. She then sought their assistance in the giving of her diagnosis and treatments to patients as she know that this is crucial and can be destructive for both the parties involved.

She then realized that she needs to seriously seek help especially if she still wants to be part of UCLA's Department of Psychiatry during that time. She eventually became the director of Mood disorders in that institution as well. She was able to find a psychiatrist to whom she is comfortable to share her feelings, inhibitions and problems. Her doctor persuaded her to put in more time and be more faithful in her medications and sessions. She insisted that she should regularly follow its schedule. Her family and colleagues supported her throughout this trying time in her life.

It was rather difficult for her to expose herself not only to those belonging in the medical profession but to her patients as well. There is always the fear of rejection and disapproval that eventually she was able to overcome. She made this experience as being more resilient in the trials that her profession has to offer. The wisdom that she was able to gain by going through the process made her more credible and a foremost authority on manic depression illness.

The book was able to clarify and vividly describes the condition known as sever manic depression. This is written skillfully, making it as enticing as humorous as possible to make it easier to accompany her in her journey especially in how she treated her disease. The book was able to hold on to the attention of the reader all throughout. Likewise, it was able to disperse any wrong connotation about the illness that is being described. What's more surprising is that is was able to account the benefits of the condition and the unexpected sense of euphoria that she felt. In addition, it was able to deal thoroughly tough and complicated topics such as facing one's denial stage and compliance to different medications.

The case presented by Dr. Jamison based on her experience points out the need to treat the illness of manic depression using two techniques namely medication and psychotherapy. She

also reiterates the importance of the involvement of her family and a professional in case she becomes a danger even to herself.

She was also able to outline the advantages of making one's colleagues aware of what one is going through. This is not only to seek their understanding and acceptance but to protect one self and the patients against any lapse of judgment. As she puts it in her novel:

"The real dangers [are] those clinicians... who-because of the stigma or fear of suspension of their privileges or expulsion from medical school... are hesitant to seek out psychiatric treatment. Left untreated, or unsupervised, many become ill, endangering not only their own lives, but those of others."

This is one of the reason for her success in the field that she choose to pursue, she was given enough support in making the most out of her condition. Mood disorders in itself is very difficult and frightening to treat. While restoration to normalcy is quite easy to obtain, proper guidance and the feeling of security and kindness and is still essential. This is needed not only as a last resort but as a companion to all medications and treatment that one will undergo.

This compelling story of how a woman of such caliber can also be as vulnerable as anyone else. She is an epitome of courage and what the human spirit is capable of doing. She gave us hope that everything is worth living and fighting for, so long as one have a strong character and disposition. That the Unquiet mind can be finally rested with one's love for oneself, family and others.