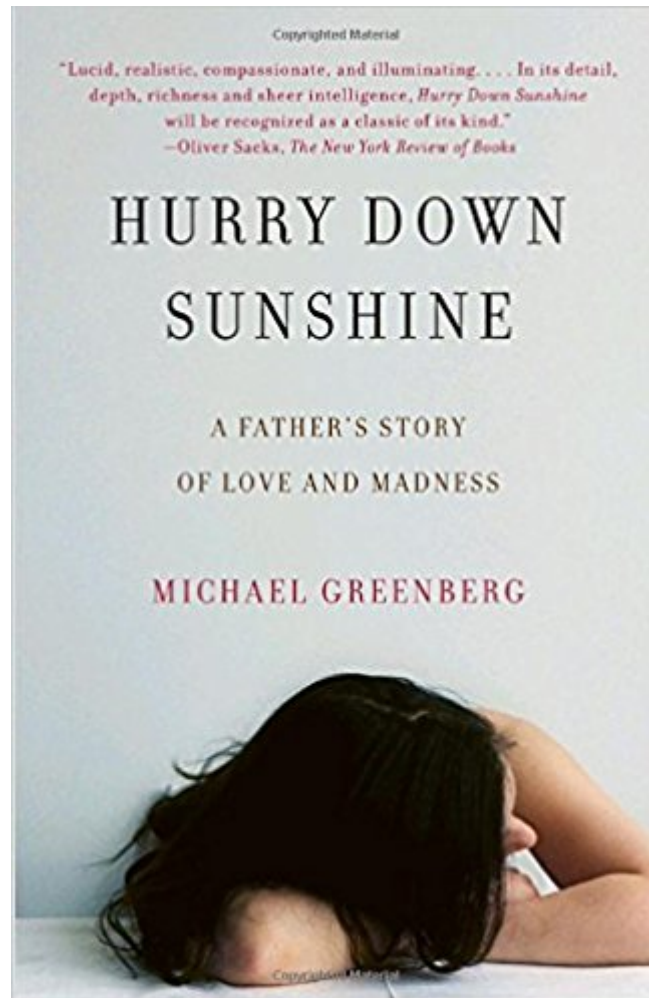




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Hurry Down Sunshine: A Father's Story Of Love And Madness



Synopsis

A TIME BEST BOOK OF THE YEAR *Hurry Down Sunshine* is an extraordinary family story and a memoir of exceptional power. In it, Michael Greenberg recounts in vivid detail the remarkable summer when, at the age of fifteen, his daughter was struck mad. It begins with Sally's sudden visionary crack-up on the streets of Greenwich Village, and continues, among other places, in the out-of-time world of a Manhattan psychiatric ward during the city's most sweltering months. It is a tale of a family broken open, then painstakingly, movingly stitched together again. Among Greenberg's unforgettable cast of characters are an unconventional psychiatrist, an Orthodox Jewish patient, a manic Classics professor, a movie producer, and a landlord with literary aspirations. Unsentimental, nuanced, and deeply humane, *Hurry Down Sunshine* is essential reading in the literature of affliction alongside classics such as *Girl, Interrupted* and *An Unquiet Mind*.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Best of the Month, September 2008: Michael Greenberg's spare, unflinching memoir begins with a bang: "On July 5, 1996, my daughter was struck mad." *Hurry Down Sunshine* chronicles the summer when fifteen-year-old Sally experienced her first full-blown manic episode—an event that in a "single stroke" changed her identity and, by extension, that of her entire family. Simply told and beautifully written, Greenberg's memoir shines a stark light on mental illness, painting a vivid picture of a brain and body under siege; mania as a separate living thing squatting within the patient. As a writer who lives "so much in his head," Greenberg is particularly anguished by his

daughter's fractured psyche, and his honesty about being both sickened and fascinated by his daughter's condition is breathtaking: "During the worst moments, I think of her as my disease—the disease I must bear...I am intoxicated with Sally's madness in both senses of the word: inebriated and poisoned." So desperate is he to understand her, that he relentlessly researches mental illness (the book is peppered with fascinating insights into drug therapy and anecdotes about writers who struggled with madness), and even goes so far as to sample a full dose of his daughter's medication. Startling, heart-wrenching, and yet unwaveringly unsentimental, *Hurry Down Sunshine* is an unforgettable story of a young girl's descent into madness, told through the eyes of a harried and helpless father trying desperately to bring her back. --Daphne Durham

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Greenberg, a columnist for London's *Times Literary Supplement*, was living in Greenwich Village in 1996 when his 15-year-old daughter, Sally, suddenly became manic, importuning strangers and ranting in the streets about her newfound cosmic wisdom. She was a danger to herself and others, so her father and stepmother had her committed to a psychiatric facility. Greenberg was no stranger to mental illness; he'd been caring for his dysfunctional brother most of their adult lives. Still, Sally was so brilliant, so caring, he couldn't bear the thought of her ending up like his brother. During the 24 long days Sally spent in the hospital, Greenberg learned to cope. He watched a Hasidic family visiting with their mentally ill young man. He pondered his ex-wife going to cuddle with Sally, as if she were still a little girl. He listened to his mother explain her troubled marriage and the subsequent mental illness of his brother. He wondered at his present wife's resilience. After Sally's discharge, questions of how they would adjust to their new lives were complicated in very different ways. In this well-written and sincere memoir, Greenberg proves to be a caring man trying to find his way through the minefield of a loved one's madness. (Sept.) 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.

Michael Greenberg's brilliant and mesmerizing memoir of his daughter's madness is a poignant and terrifying book about the depths and peaks of mania and the desperate struggle that a loved one will go to in order to bring someone back from the world of psychosis. When Greenberg's daughter, Sally, first becomes psychotic, he thinks it is more her creativity than anything else. He is slow to recognize her manic state. But then, who would first assume that someone they love has gone to a place of madness. "But how does one tell the difference between Plato's "divine madness" and

gibberish? Between enthousiasmos (literally, to be inspired by a god) and lunacy? Between the prophet and the "medically mad". "A long journey ensues for Sally and her family: hospitalization, horrendous pharmacological interventions, psychiatric care, day hospitals, regimens for behavioral therapy and behavioral contracts. The medications make her weary and unable to concentrate. She becomes sluggish and unlike her quick and creative self. Her father decides to try the medication to get an idea of what it is doing to Sally. He says, "It begins to hit me - - in waves. I feel dizzy and far away, as if I am about to fall from a great height but my feet are nailed to the edge of the precipice, so that the rush of the fall itself is indefinitely deferred. The air feels watery and thick, until finally I am neck-deep in a swamp through which it is possible to move only with the greatest of effort, and then only a few feet at a time". Such is the state that his daughter is in with the medicine. Without it, however, she is mad. Her identity becomes obscured. Who is this beloved daughter? How did she get to the state she is in? "I keep asking myself the obvious question, the helpless question. How did this happen? And why? One has cancer or AIDS, but one is schizophrenic, one is manic depressive, as if they were innate attributes of being, part of the human spectrum, no more curable than one's temperament or the color of one's eyes." The author struggles with how to view his beloved Sally, how to separate her from her disease, how to separate himself from her disease. The book is peopled by interesting characters. There is Steve, the author's mentally ill brother for whom he is caretaker. There is a family of Hasidic Jews in the Psychiatric unit, looking over and caring for one of their own. There is the author's wife, a dancer and choreographer who loves Sally very much. There is Sally's biological mother, the author's ex-wife, who is paralyzed with fear at Sally's illness and first hopes that some homeopathic remedies will make a difference. There is the author's well-dressed and lovely mother who searches her past to assure the author that Sally is not, absolutely is not, like his brother Steve. Sally eventually reaches an equilibrium of recovery and remission from her manic depression. She is able to return to school though she is fearful and reticent about her history as a "mental patient". The story has no happy ending, as the disease does not just disappear. It may hide for a while but it is ever present. Sally has a lifetime of heavy-duty medications and psychiatric interventions in order for her to maintain a semblance of normalcy. She is forever in the grips of the mental health system, a system not always user friendly to families and loved ones. The author paints a realistic and painful picture of what mental illness in a family can do to the victim and her loved ones. It is a powerful picture, one that is not soon to be forgotten. Anyone who has ever dealt with mental illness or has an interest in it will be enriched by this book. It is a must-read for any person who loves someone who is mentally ill or is touched by mental illness in any way. This means all of us. Bonnie Brody

This is a well-written, first-hand account of a teenage girl's mental breakdown and painful recovery, as seen through the eyes of her father. For those interested in the topic of mental health, this is a page-turner. I read it from beginning to end in one day. It's a raw and honest look at one family's experience with mental illness and the process of denial, shame and finally, acquiescence, to a disease they were unfamiliar with. I would have liked to have understood more about the days/weeks/months leading up to the daughter's final "snap." But overall, the story is fascinating, if not heartbreaking. Readers who enjoyed "An Unquiet Mind" will enjoy *Hurry Down Sunshine*.

I would love to read an updated version of this story. Greenberg painfully describes his daughter's journey through her psychotic breakdown as a 15 year old and the events of her hospitalization and return to 'normalcy' - whatever that is. He is able to paint the picture of the pain, confusion, and suffering of not only his daughter, but of each family member as they deal with their grief and consideration of their contribution to her illness. I think the best part of the story is the realization that the daughter's illness became the family's identity. As a nurse very interested in mental health in children and adolescents, this book emphasizes the point that mental health issues can and should be identified and treated early.

The author of this book is a professional writer and sometimes I found it too flowery and wordy, however I learned A LOT from this book. I didn't know how psychotic 'episodes' worked. That they can come in cycles or season and come and go. We read this for our CASA book club and it was very informative and it was very well written. I feel it truly shows the love the author has for his daughter.

The book opens with the author's daughter going "mad". Caught in a fit of mania, she's admitted to the psych ward in NYC. Her father, stepmother, mother, brother, and grandmother all approach her mania differently, but her father is the most perplexed by it and therefore driven to try to understand it. Previously Sally was a vibrant, creative teenager who one day, seems to lose it completely. After she's admitted to the hospital and her family begins learning about her illness (she's eventually diagnosed with bipolar disorder) they begin to see the signs they missed, before her mania spun so far out of control. If anyone has had any experience with bipolar disorder, this is an interesting read without being overly medical or clinical.

I can relate to this story in many ways! I also have a mental health diagnosis, unlike my family who was not there for me or understood what I was going through, this teen had the love and support from her father and the whole family to get her through many episodes of mania and depression from Bi-Polar Disorder! I feel that anyone who has a family member or a friend with Bi-Polar Disorder would be enlightened and learn from this book!

Thoroughly worth your time, "Hurry Down Sunshine" is the story of how author Greenberg's beloved fifteen year old daughter suffered through early bouts of mania in the heat of a New York summer roughly ten years back. How lucky was the young lady to have a father who loved her so much and was so thoughtful and kind in his care, as well as in the telling of this tale. As someone who has suffered bouts of severe mental illness and has been hospitalized, the portrayals of the illness and its treatment ring true. Heartily endorsed by this reader for all people who love someone with mental illness as well as lovers of great writing.

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