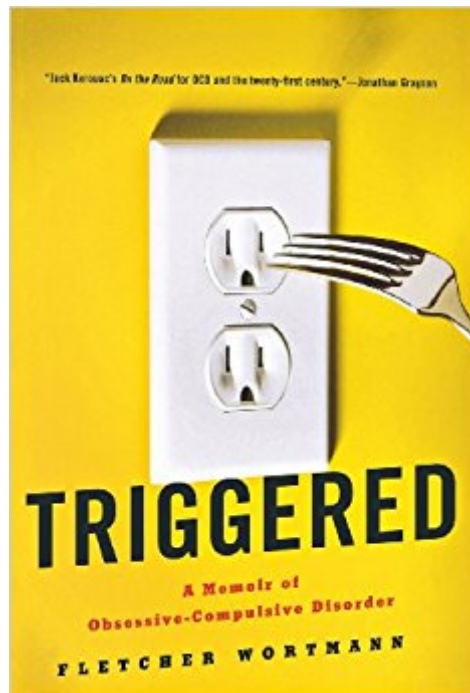




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Triggered: A Memoir Of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder



Synopsis

AS FEATURED ON NPR'S TALK OF THE NATIONImagine the worst thing in the world. Picture it. Construct it, carefully and deliberately in your mind. Be careful not to omit anything. Imagine it happening to you, to the people you love. Imagine the worst thing in the world. Now try not to think about it. This is what it is like for Fletcher Wortmann. In his brilliant memoir, the author takes us on an intimate journey across the psychological landscape of OCD, known as the "doubting disorder," as populated by God, girls, and apocalyptic nightmares. Wortmann unflinchingly reveals the elaborate series of psychological rituals he constructs as "preventative measures" to ward off the end times, as well as his learning to cope with intrusive thoughts through Clockwork Orange-like "trigger" therapy. But even more than this, the author emerges as a preternatural talent as he unfolds a kaleidoscope of culture high and low ranging from his obsessions with David Bowie, X-Men, and Pokemon, to an eclectic education shaped by Shakespeare, Kierkegaard, Catholic mysticism, Christian comic books, and the collegiate dating scene at the "People's Republic of Swarthmore." Triggered is a pitch-perfect memoir; a touching, triumphantly funny, compulsively readable, and ultimately uplifting coming-of-age tale for Generation Anxiety. Fletcher Wortmann on OCD and sex: "If a girl accepts an invitation to help count the tiles on your bedroom ceiling, then she will probably be disappointed when she realizes you were speaking literally." — *on OCD and religion*: "I have found Catholicism and obsessive compulsive disorder to be deeply sympathetic to one another. One is a repressive construct founded in existential terror, barely restrained by complex, arbitrary ritual behaviors; the other is an anxiety disorder." — *on OCD humor*: "By the sink, I noticed a perfunctory sign warning readers to wash their hands. It was scrawled with graffiti: NO YOU CAN'T GERMS ARE UNPREVENTABLE AND INESCAPABLE." — *on the seductiveness of OCD*: "Every so often, everything will work, and you will somehow convince yourself that you are safe, and the disorder will claim credit. I had struck a bargain with the OCD. The transaction was complete. In that moment I became subservient to it."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“Consider...at any moment, the end of the world could occur...[Now] prove, with absolute certainty, that this is not true.’ In his grimly funny memoir, Wortmann, an actor and comedy writer, describes the heart-thumping panic that came with his obsessive-compulsive disorder. Only adherence to certain elaborate rituals, he believed, could ward off annihilation. Triggered is key reading for sufferers of this debilitating condition -and for those who want to understand them.”

—People magazine (3 1/2 out of 4 stars)

“Wortmann writes eloquently about his battles with OCD, constructing dense, dramatic prose to convey even the tiniest observations... his inspiring victories after successful treatment ring true.”

—Kirkus Reviews

“This touching and often quite funny memoir chronicles a young life perennially on the verge of emotional or physical collapse. OCD, Wortmann notes, demands things that the world is unable to give, safety and certainty. He writes about his childhood, the social paralysis that plagued him through his high-school and college years, self-loathing and suicidal impulses, and the time spent at McLean Hospital outside of Boston, the famous psychiatric institution that has treated musician James Taylor and mathematician John Nash, among others. He comments about his “Vicious-and-Spungen-level unhealthy” relationships (as in the Sex Pistols’ Sid Vicious and his out-of-control girlfriend Nancy Spungen) and the strange symbiotic relationship that he finds between his disorder and Catholicism. Though meant to help anyone who suffers from mental illness, Wortman’s chronicle is also intended for the rest of us, as it sheds illuminating light on an often misunderstood and quite mysterious condition.”

—Booklist (starred review)

“At times horrifying, at times terribly funny...Bravo!”

—Janine Latus, New York Times bestselling author of *If I Am Missing or Dead*

“Fletcher Wortmann’s memoir, *Trigger*, is an acid bath of self-revelation and recognition--incisive, sardonic, brutally honest. His defective “better angel” delivers the interior landscape of OCD with rare crystal clarity.”

—Gregory Frost, Director of Fiction Writing Workshop, Swarthmore College, and author of *Shadowbridge*

“Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road* for OCD and the 21st century.”

Jonathan Grayson, PhD., author of *Freedom from Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder* “Triggered: A Memoir of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder is for anyone who is or knows someone who is suffering from mental illness of any type. It is well-written by a man who could be writing fiction and mak[es] you laugh or cry depending on the moment.”

Psych Central “This is a fascinating memoir about mental illness. It is neither maudlin nor whinny, but it portrays a life lived under the weight of a serious disease. What surprised me most about the book was the light tone the author chose to tell his story.”

NetGalley “While the events he describes are universal (high school hell, the first kiss, first love, the crippling workload of Swarthmore academics), the complications arising from his disorder are unique, and portrayed with quirky honesty throughout his memoir.”

Swarthmore Phoenix

FLETCHER WORTMANN was born and raised in Winchester, MA. He graduated from high school in 2005, and in 2007, Fletcher was diagnosed with crippling obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). After receiving treatment at McLean Hospital in Belmont, MA, he went on to receive his Bachelor’s degree in English Literature from Swarthmore College in 2009; he wrote his senior thesis on the evolution of the superhero in American culture. Fletcher has been variously employed as a college Writing Instructor, “Party Associate,” SAT Tutor, record store clerk, and farm-stand hand. He lives and writes in Boston, MA.

I think Mr. Wortmann did a terrific job writing this book when you consider his age and his condition. I believe one of his main goals was to make sure people understand that OCD can manifest itself in many ways. If so, he was very successful. There was a tv show titled OBSESSED (or something like that) several years ago which dealt with the different symptoms of people with OCD and showed them going through cognitive therapy to improve. It was very interesting and I wish it had been on for more than one season. There was a lot of time spent on his teenage years that didn’t sound much different from your normal very bright and very sensitive male adolescent’s. I didn’t understand what to me seemed like hostility toward his first girlfriend. Still, ending that relationship was a very healthy thing to do. I wish the author luck with his writing career and I hope he will continue writing about himself and others.

As someone who was diagnosed with OCD just this past year, I can fully relate to the events chronicled in *Triggered*. I’d almost convinced myself that I was insane when, like Wortman, a simple

Google search (of all freakin' things) finally shed some light on what it was that I'd struggled with all my life. Fortunately, the extremity of my sickness wasn't nearly as consuming as what Trigger's author has endured, but I think it's entirely possible that memoirs of this nature are going to eventually go hand-in-hand with treatment of OCD in the not too distant future. Even though Wortman expresses the cathartic nature of having written the book, I'm not sure if even he is fully aware of how powerful of a healing tool it will likely be for many, many people. It's pioneering in its honesty, and I don't know of any other book that so accurately details the horror associated with the intrusive thoughts that often characterize the disorder in question. Heck, even if you don't suffer from OCD there is plenty to admire here: I mean, what's more resonant than the trials and tribulations of an awkward teen/twenty-something trying to find his place in the world? We've all been there, and, like Wortman, can reflect on the scenarios that defined our post-high school lives with at least a little humor. But I digress. If you're looking for a candid glimpse into what it's like to be forged in the ever-present fires of OCD, Triggered is your book. It's simultaneously gut wrenching, hilarious, and poignant.

This is an unusual book. These kinds of memoirs are not usually written by men so it is an interesting view point. And he is an angry young man, particularly in the first part of the book, but if you stick with it he mellows and gives really good insights. Fortunately his family was wonderful throughout the whole ordeal (even though they did not know what was wrong) so at least he had that important thing going for him when everything else seemed stacked against him. And, I think, that points to biology rather than nurture as the cause of his mental illness. He writes beautifully with a superb vocabulary and his language is graphic but not inappropriately so considering the circumstances. What was most interesting is that his form of OCD is not the way we usually think of that that disease - excessive hand washing, etc. Of course he is scrupulously neat and organized (as he points out OCD is a pathological intolerance of risk however minute) but his agony is caused by unrelenting invasive terrible thoughts - graphic, violent and often sexual. The inability to control this is soul destroying. He walks us through his adolescent and college years which were literally a nightmare. Finally a weak effort at suicide prompts hospitalization and ultimately diagnosis and then long term treatment. His insights are really quite profound, particularly when you consider how young he is (early twenties right now). I can highly recommend the book to anyone interested in OCD, mental illness, depression, anxiety, etc. He has a lot to teach us.

I am absolutely delighted to recommend Fletcher Wortmann's book, Triggered: A Memoir of

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. I read the book in two evenings. In the book Mr. Wortmann takes us from the time when he was a little boy as his symptoms were beginning to emerge to the present time. The book tells a story of a boy who often is in extreme internal distress and sometimes despair. Fletcher Wortmann and his family spend many years trying to find solutions to the "Problem". A complexity in their situation is that Mr. Wortmann has a less well known type of obsessive compulsive disorder referred to as "Pure O"--Pure Obsession. Intrusive, obsessive and often disturbing thoughts are what characterize this form of the disorder. It is not coupled with the compulsions of handwashing, counting or other rituals. Therefore, it is not as easily recognized and often is misdiagnosed. This was the experience of The Wortmann family -- It is a story about a son struggling for years in pain often feeling alienated from his peers and the world at large. It is a story about the parental pain of watching a child struggle and not being able to find the solutions to his problems. It is a story that documents the impact of mental health issues of one family member on the entire family and will resonate with any parent who has had to watch their child suffer. This is a poignant, painful story that Fletcher Wortmann tells with intelligence and wit. As Mr. Wortmann takes us through his years of confusion and despair, the reader feels his pain as well. As he develops insights about his disorder and acceptance of the ongoing implications this will have in his life, the reader also feels a sense of accomplishment in overcoming adversity and a sense of triumph and hope for the future. This book is a must read for individuals and families who are struggling with issues of obsessive compulsive disorder. As a mental health professional I also give it a strong recommendation. I know it will be an invaluable tool in my work with my own clients. It is a book that gives a voice and answers to so many people out there who are suffering alone. Kathleen Montgomery

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