



Most of Me: Surviving My Medical Meltdown

Robyn Michele Levy

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With irreverent and at times mordant humor, *Most of Me* chronicles **Robyn Michele Levy**'s early, mysterious symptoms (a dragging left foot, a crash into "downward dead dog" position on the yoga mat), the devastating Parkinson's diagnosis, her subsequent discovery of two lumps in her breast (Little Lump and Big Blob), her mastectomy and her life since then dealing with her diverse disease portfolio. She is accompanied on her journey by a fantastic cast of characters, including her Cry Lady (who always makes appearances at inopportune times) and perky Dolores the Prosthesis, as well as a convoy of health professionals, family members, friends, and neighbors. Both heartbreakingly and hilariously, *Most of Me* offers a unique glimpse into a creative mind, an ailing body, and the restorative power of humor and fantasy.

Most of Me: Surviving My Medical Meltdown Details

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Author : Robyn Michele Levy

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From Reader Review Most of Me: Surviving My Medical Meltdown for online ebook

Dannielle Insalaco says

It's rare that I review a book about Parkinson's because usually they fit into one of 2 categories: 1) the "now that I have PD my life goal is clearer and I'm happier" or 2) the "I just got the diagnosis and it's not so bad". For obvious reasons there are very few "it takes me an hour to put on my socks, I don't really care if my Depends look like real underwear, and doesn't everyone take 3 naps a day" books. Most of Me is one of those rare books that takes a realistic look at PD and mixes the cold honesty with laugh-out-loud humor.

Brett Mackey says

It's unusual that a book affects me in such a profound manner however Robyn writes with fierce honesty and a seriously deranged but delicious wit. The prose alternates between the realities of having serious medical problems and her very funny reactions to dealing with the enormity of the situation. I found the book a page turner and read the book in virtually one sitting.

I could go on and on describing a very readable and enormously satisfying book that will appeal to a wide range of readers but don't want to give away any of the juicy bits.

Becky Ziaja says

The author shares her story about having both breast cancer and Parkinson's in her early forties with sarcasm and humor. I was left wondering how dark things got for her. I had a hard time accepting someone could be so lighthearted about having these diseases so young. The most she touched on this side of things was referencing her "Cry Lady" which I couldn't relate to.

Rosanne says

With lots of grit and determination, Robyn Levy faces some incredible medical challenges. Her sense of irony and humor seems to have gotten her through some devastating diagnoses. This was a relatively quick read and in spite of the subject matter, is not the downer you would think. It's quite a lesson in spunk!

Susan Bazzett-Griffith says

I can only give this book two stars because while I believe the author is strong and writes about the experience of living with disease realistically and honestly, I actually found the book slow and kind of boring. Which, to be fair, is often how living with disease feels, so the reflection of reality is accurate, and her ability to find moments of joy do make you smile and root for her, and reading about how gracefully her

family copes with her illness, the book didn't keep my attention. I had to put it down several times and finished it because it felt like the right thing to do, like Ms. Levy's story deserved the respect of my reading it, and I am happy to do that, but would I recommend it to others to read/ can I think of anyone who would enjoy this? Unless they're struggling with their own diagnoses and hardships with coping with diseases, probably not. I imagine, more than anything, that people who know and love her will love this book and be grateful that it has been published, that she has shared this piece of herself with the world, but it likely won't interest that many others out there in the world. Two stars for the book, but 5 for the heart of a woman doing the best she can in a tough situation.

Olga Godim says

*This review was originally published at StoryCircleBookReviews:
<http://www.storycirclebookreviews.org...>*

Sometimes, laughter is the only way to deflect despair. Robyn Michelle Levy knows it from personal experience. Her memoir *Most of Me* is simultaneously amusing and poignant. From the first word, the story pulled me in and never let go, and the pages practically turned themselves. But it was a harrowing read, too, because of the subject matter: a serious, life-altering illness. Or rather two of them at once.

With poise, candor, and self-deprecating humor, Levy writes about her medical plight. At the age of 43, she was diagnosed with early onset Parkinson's. Eight months later, while still reconciling her debilitating affliction, she added breast cancer to her list of maladies. So far, she has won both battles.

Her memoir covers several years before and after her diagnoses. The book starts with 'before,' when the author struggled with her deteriorating health and bouts of depression without knowing why. Her immediate family—husband and teenage daughter—were often on the receiving end of her black moods, and afterwards, she was swamped by remorse. Then the bomb of Parkinson's exploded in her face.

Throughout the book, Levy is relentlessly honest, as she chronicles her seething cauldron of emotions: anger and guilt, shame and acceptance, terror of impending diapers and determination to survive. She also details the support and affection she received from her friends and family during her arduous medical journey. In a way, the book is a tribute to her loved ones, although the writing never slides towards melodrama. Funny asides and droll observations keep the narrative balanced on a tasteful line between mushy and tragic.

One of the grimmest problems the author faced after each of her two diagnoses was how to tell her thirteen-year-old daughter. The situation was exacerbated by the fact that Levy's father was diagnosed with Parkinson's a couple years before. She writes: "We're in the same sinking boat now: daughters coping with parents who have Parkinson's. Under these circumstances, how can anything be OK? How can we get through this together, when I'm falling apart?"

Tears sprang to my eyes when I read those and similar lines. But more often than not, a morbid joke was only one step behind. Laughter and gentle self-mockery permeate the book. No dysfunction of the writer's ailing body is off-limits to her irreverent keyboard, even when breast cancer piles on top of Parkinson's. In her bleakest moments, humor sparkles, as she describes her recovery after mastectomy; outlines her wrestling with the question: chemo or no chemo; or tells us about naming her prosthetic breast Dolores. "If I don't laugh I would cry," she writes.

The same applies to me, as a reader. If I didn't smile so often while reading the book I would've cried too. Books about illnesses are always emotionally draining, and this one was no exception. I wanted to protect myself from the author's pain, but even more I wanted to understand how she found the strength to deal with her "diverse disease portfolio." I read the book, and grinned, and chuckled, and learned from Levy's courage. Definitely recommended to anyone.

Brooke Binkowski says

I just picked this up and started reading it at random, and I cannot truthfully say I couldn't put it down. Quite the opposite -- I had to put it down, frequently, because to read any further would be too heartwrenching -- but I always picked it back up again.

This is a wry, funny, and extremely heartbreakingly book about a woman diagnosed with first early-onset Parkinson's (she first starts having symptoms at around age 38) and then breast cancer and how she deals with it all. It's crammed with gallows humor and honestly uplifting moments. I'm sort of glad Levy doesn't live anywhere near me, though; she seems like the kind of person I'd love to hang out with, but then I'd have to go home and invoke my own personal Cry Lady.

Jean Grant says

I loved this memoir. I read it in two sittings, sneaking off to finish it when I had things I was supposed to be doing. I laughed out loud several times while reading it. And I learned a lot--about things every woman kinda wants to know but doesn't really want to ask because you're not quite sure what you're getting yourself in for when you ask about cancer procedures. And I knew nothing about Parkinson's disease, and painlessly and humorously, I learned a great deal. Robyn Levy is a marvelous writer, laugh-out-loud funny, clear, and astute.

Debbie says

Wow. This author has such a gift for storytelling. She has been through the most awful things, yet she finds humor in all of it. You want to cry one minute and then you literally laugh out loud the next because she is so clever and irreverent with her words. I was so frustrated with her not getting the diagnosis that explained her symptoms for so long - why does that still happen in this day and age of instant information about everything? But so relieved towards the end as things actually do get better again - not all better, by any stretch - but much better than they were. Phew. I would read anything this author writes. She should have a weekly column somewhere - Anna Quindlen style.

Julie says

So after a surprise diagnosis of Parkinsons disease, Robyn Michelle Levy is just beginning to live with that when she discovers she also has breast cancer.

With an older husband, a teenage daughter and older parents dealing with their own health issues, most of us can understand her bewilderment at the changes going on in her life. I admire her ability to keep her sense of humour throughout, and to be able to laugh when I know that I would have broken down and cried.

A 4/5 from me.

Suzie Q says

Great book, touching and funny all at the same time. Mom in her 40s discovers she is going through early onset Parkinson's as her father is also going through it. Then on top of everything else she discovers she has breast cancer.

this was right along the same lines as the book the Middle Place by Kelly Corrigan

Ariane says

Um, I just finished this book. Already. That's just over 2 days. I don't think this has happened before... (I'm usually a really slow reader, I swear).

I loved it. As someone who lives with multiple chronic illnesses, I found the author's account of getting diagnosed with early onset Parkinsons, and then within a year, early stage breast cancer slightly horrifying. And also amazingly brave, honest, and funny, amongst the sadness. It's funny in a good way though, not one of those silly comedies about illness types of books. That she's from the CBC only puts the icing on the cake.

I can only hope I too will eventually learn to deal with my own (non-life threatening, and non-degenerative) illnesses with that much humour and vitality.

Christina McDaniel says

The author tells the story of her diagnosis with early-onset Parkinson's disease and breast cancer within 8 mos. of each other. She refers to herself as "the morbid measuring stick" (Levy, 137)--a barometer in which everyone else measures their own suffering. Yet, I have never met a story so full of suffering while simultaneously so full of hope and humor. She doesn't turn the story of receiving two life altering diagnoses in her early forties into a slap stick comedy: her humor is carefully chosen, coping with the absurdity of it all and illuminating the complex and painful emotions associated with her illnesses.

Jennifer says

This was wonderfully transparent and tragically humorous. It was hopeful and sad and beautiful. The most important thing I took away was the need for strong supportive friendships.

Carol says

I know I'm in the minority here, but I just didn't enjoy this book. I have all the sympathy in the world for

Levy, but found the crude humor wearing. I have no idea what it's like to have Parkinson's and can't imagine how frightening that would be. But I can relate to breast cancer and while I respect her right to deal with it in whatever way she needs to, I just found her approach jarring.
