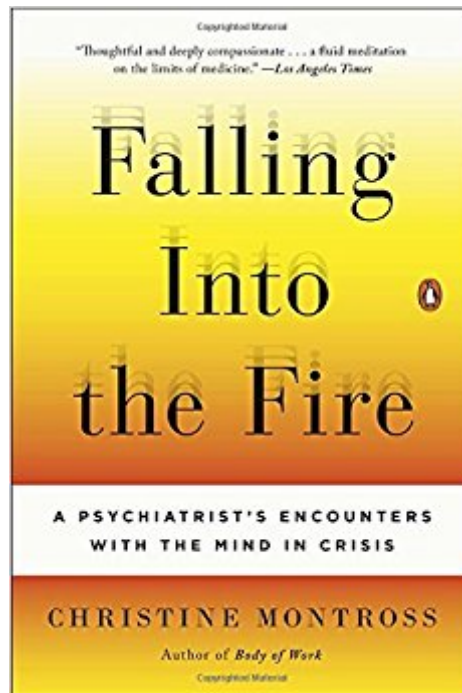




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Falling Into The Fire: A Psychiatrist's Encounters With The Mind In Crisis



Synopsis

Falling Into the Fire is psychiatrist Christine Montross's thoughtful investigation of the gripping patient encounters that have challenged and deepened her practice. The majority of the patients Montross treats in Falling Into the Fire are seen in the locked inpatient wards of a psychiatric hospital; all are in moments of profound crisis. We meet a young woman who habitually commits self-injury, having ingested light bulbs, a box of nails, and a steak knife, among other objects. Her repeated visits to the hospital incite the frustration of the staff, leading Montross to examine how emotion can interfere with proper care. A recent college graduate, dressed in a tunic and declaring that love emanates from everything around him, is brought to the ER by his concerned girlfriend. Is it ecstasy or psychosis? What legal ability do doctors have to hospitalize—and sometimes medicate—a patient against his will? A new mother is admitted with incessant visions of harming her child. Is she psychotic and a danger or does she suffer from obsessive thoughts? Her course of treatment—and her child's future—depends upon whether she receives the correct diagnosis. Each case study presents its own line of inquiry, leading Montross to seek relevant psychiatric knowledge from diverse sources. A doctor of uncommon curiosity and compassion, Montross discovers lessons in medieval dancing plagues, in leading forensic and neurological research, and in moments from her own life. Beautifully written, deeply felt, Falling Into the Fire brings us inside the doctor's mind, illuminating the grave human costs of mental illness as well as the challenges of diagnosis and treatment. Throughout, Montross confronts the larger question of psychiatry: What is to be done when a patient's experiences cannot be accounted for, or helped, by what contemporary medicine knows about the brain? When all else fails, Montross finds, what remains is the capacity to abide, to sit with the desperate in their darkest moments. At once rigorous and meditative, Falling Into the Fire is an intimate portrait of psychiatry, allowing the reader to witness the humanity of the practice and the enduring mysteries of the mind.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Psychiatrists regularly deal with people who are out of control, scared, suicidal, or despondent. "It is not a dull job," Montross writes. Each chapter of her book revolves around a theme: difficulties in establishing a psychiatric diagnosis, patients who intentionally injure themselves, the responsibility of involuntary psychiatric hospitalization and treatment, patients who are preoccupied with and tormented by their essentially normal anatomy, and how the mind can make the body sick. Readers meet a mother who experiences recurrent thoughts of hurting her child, a young woman who won't stop swallowing foreign objects (crushed light bulbs, AA batteries, and knives), otherwise sane people with normal legs desiring elective limb amputations, a man with either early schizophrenia or bipolar mania whose "bliss" is medicated away, and a woman with pseudoseizures (their origin is psychological, not neurological). Montross finds a sort of spirituality in her profession. "Healing is a kind of holiness," "Every diagnosis is an act of faith." Diagnoses rest upon a physician's knowledge and judgment but also clinical intuition. We are all fragile and vulnerable creatures. Compassion counts. --Tony Miksanek --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

"Thoughtful and deeply compassionate . . . a fluid meditation on the limits of medicine." --Los Angeles Times "Thought-provoking" | Dr. Montross, an award-winning poet before attending medical school, is passionate about her work and her patients' plight. She addresses these issues with intelligence; and by deftly intertwining her patients' stories with historical facts, current research and ethical quandaries, she presents a moving and nuanced picture of the psychiatric patient and doctor relationship, and a riveting and thought-provoking look at mental health care. --Pauline W. Chen, M.D., The New York Times "As good an account of the labyrinth of mental health care as you're likely to read." --The Daily Beast "Montross explores the practical, emotional, and philosophical challenges of working with patients whose illnesses of the mind are often intractable and deeply disturbing."

•The New Yorker•“A sympathetic portrait of seriously ill patients that could guide future practitioners on the art of helping, if not always healing, the sick.”•Kirkus•[Montross’s] intriguing analysis is anchored by the humble and empathetic voice of a psychiatrist working in a field wherein “every diagnosis is an act of faith.”•Publisher’s Weekly

FALLING INTO THE FIRE: A PSYCHIATRIST’S ENCOUNTERS WITH THE MIND IN CRISIS, by Christine Montross, The Penguin Press, 2013, 239

pages.http://www..com/s/ref=nb_sb_ss_i_2_21?url=search-alias%3Dstripbooks&field-keywords=falling+into+the+fire+a+psychiatrist%27s+encounters+with+the+mind+in+crisis&sprefix=falling+into+the+fire%2Caps%2C304http://www..com/product-reviews/0143125710/ref=acr_search_see_all?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1. My daughter thoroughly enjoyed Montross’ book and gave to me on 2 August 2015. The reviews are mostly positive and deservedly so. Dr. Montross is amazingly candid about her personal life and her interaction with psychiatric patients. She skillfully describes how her personal experience, what she learned from her patients and her lessons from mentors and the psychiatric literature are intertwined to help her better understand all humans. While I don’t always agree with her conclusions they are well thought out and well researched. She comes across as a very intelligent, thoughtful, caring and loving human. While anyone can read this book for enjoyment and profit, it will be of special interest to psychiatrists and patients. Frank

Combining her own personal life experiences as a partner and mother with those of patients she has witnessed as an inpatient psychiatrist on the east coast, gifted author Christine Montross bridges the gap between a book that is illuminating on the one hand and downright disturbing on the other. Most crucial to Montross’ story is her ability to present unique patient histories with an insightful mind that is constantly on the lookout for new means of treatment while providing the reader access to historical data on the subject at hand. One chapter not to be missed is titled "Your Drugs Take Away the Love" where Montross examines the world of madness as something stimulating creativity, writing, "Even if madness is at the root of some of the world’s great creations, it is hard to imagine that if someone asked each of us to live an entire life of suffering in the service of the arts, we would agree to do so." Such statements are wound around the story of an enlightened man named Colin where Montross provides a scintillating "stop and think" challenge for the reader as to how she can treat Colin’s psychotic tendencies. Without doubt a meaningful contribution to her field that is also a learning experience for any reader, "Falling into the Fire" is a

terrific follow-up to Montross' first book, "Body of Work." We can only hope that there are many such works to come.

Dr. Montross selects a handful of cases she handled on inpatient units at various points in her career as a psychiatrist. While some of the patients represent fairly rare disorders, including severe body dysmorphic disorder and a woman who engaged in self injury who ate an astonishing quantity of sharp objects for emotional relief, the whole picture of her work is very satisfying. She speaks of these patients with great compassion and a sincere desire to help unravel the reasons for and potential treatments that can ease the pain of sometimes very fragile and damaged people in real need of help. I think this book will appeal to those who work in the field as well as anyone who cares about treatment of people with mental illness.

I liked reading about the thought process of this psychiatrist as she meets and treats patients. Each patient comes with her own set of unique circumstances and story, which may or may not inform the diagnosis. Information shared from nurses and other doctors is important and sometimes not communicated clearly or gets lost in a patient's thick file. It is like the doctor has to be a very thorough investigator, combing through clues and filtering those clues through medical knowledge. The diagnoses do not come easily.

A riveting book by a brilliant author struggling to balance between humility and taking on the beast of mental illness

An empathic understanding of mental illness is involved in this fine book written by a wonderful writer. It is not easy to read because mental illness is not easy to understand. However for those interested in learning more about mental illness, this is a fine book.

Montross' compassion and brilliance shine forth in every sentence. She presents complex cases that are fascinating without being voyeuristic, and her insights are subtle yet powerful. It's been a month since I read the book, but it continues to stay with me.

Great for discussion.

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