

Book review



This is not how it ends

How rewriting your story can save your life

Category: Book Reviews / Non-Fiction / Mental Health

Author: Jehan Casinader

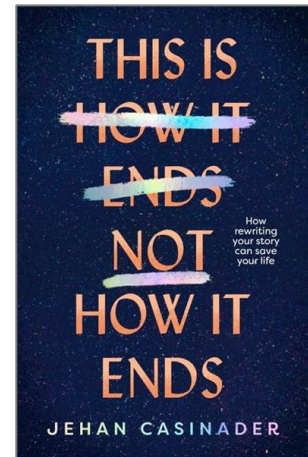
Year: 2020

Publisher: Harper Collins, NZ

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Audience: Supporting Myself

Summary: A Journey through Jehan's four year battle with depression, and how he found the power that helped him to survive in storytelling.



Typically, reading about depression is by its very nature, depressing. This book is proof that it doesn't need to be. Jehan Casinader, award winning former TVNZ journalist, has written with honesty and self-awareness on his own experience of mental distress that took him to the brink. Ultimately it's a hopeful and helpful resource to the reader.

This book speaks to all New Zealanders as it's crammed full of people and places and stories that we all know so well. Casinader's journalism skills are clear to see as he deftly writes about his personal crisis while at the same time reporting on some of New Zealand's darkest times.

This book is equally for anyone living with mental distress as well as for support people. I've supported someone through depression and it's damn hard work. I wish I'd had this book to read to give me a boost. Casinader's ability to frankly and honestly relay the constant threat to his wellbeing, while still functioning at work, shows the complexities of mental illness and why the stereotype labels thrown at a depressed person are so wrong. Casinader details with clarity his depression which seems a complete juxtaposition to his exciting and vibrant work life.

Peppered throughout the book is praise for Tommy, a mate of Jehan's who remains constantly in touch, no matter the time of day or night. His encouraging messages are included throughout the book and are clearly life-saving. Everyone needs a Tommy in their life. His unconditional support was inspiring, but the revelation of the toll it took on Tommy was one of the more poignant moments in the book for me. We all can be supportive, but ultimately self-care is paramount. The ability to seek out a variety of support systems is vital to ease the load on others.

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Casinader tells the reader that having survived mental distress, he's become stronger, wiser and more compassionate. He uses his fine journalistic skills to describe his personal story and tells the reader to craft their own story – and that no one can take that story away from you. He states the thing that separates those who survive mental distress from those who don't is the ability to become great authors. No matter how dark life may be, these people have the confidence to say "This is not how it ends".

This is a powerful book that triumphantly celebrates life in all its complex forms. Read it for better understanding of your own wellbeing, or as a how-to to support someone you know who is struggling with mental distress.

Reviewed by Mark Wilson, Media Engagement and Public Relations Officer, Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand

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