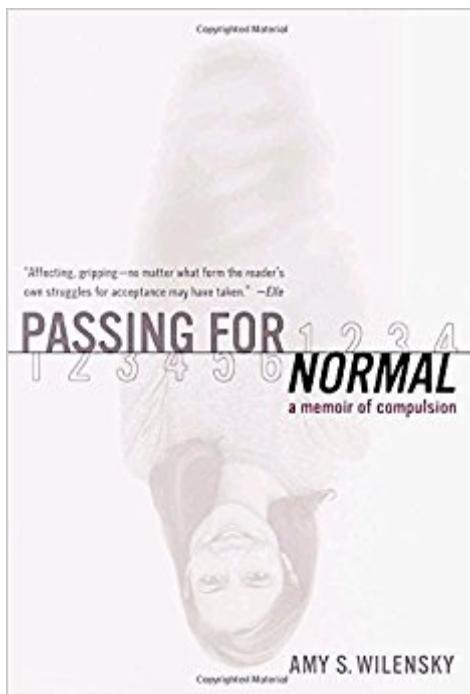


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# Passing For Normal: A Memoir Of Compulsion



## Synopsis

I am crazy. But maybe I am not. For most of her life, these thoughts plagued Amy Wilensky as her mind lurched and veered in ways she didn't understand and her body did things she couldn't control. While she excelled in school and led an otherwise "normal" life, she worried that beneath the surface she was a freak, that there was something irrevocably wrong with her. Passing for Normal is Wilensky's emotionally charged account of her lifelong struggle with the often misunderstood disorders Tourette's syndrome and obsessive-compulsive disorder. A powerful witness to her own dysfunction, Wilensky describes the strain it bore on her relationships with the people she thought she knew best: her family, her friends, and herself. Confronting the labels we apply to ourselves and others--compulsive, crazy, out of control--Amy describes her symptoms, diagnosis, and her treatment with courage and a healthy dose of humor, gradually coming to terms with the absurdities of a life beset by irrational behavior. This compelling narrative, by turns tragic and comic, broadly extends our understanding of the wonderfully complex human mind, and, with subtlety and grace, challenges our notion of what it is to be "normal."

## Book Information

Paperback: 224 pages

Publisher: Broadway Books; Reprint edition (July 5, 2000)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 076790186X

ISBN-13: 978-0767901864

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.5 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 7 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 37 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #368,515 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #232 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Mental Health > Personality Disorders #336 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Mental Health > Compulsive Behavior #4215 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Specific Groups > Women

## Customer Reviews

Growing up is difficult enough without the added stress of an unattractive and little-understood neurological condition that causes one to twitch, pick at one's skin, hoard rotten food or step six times on each stair and manhole cover one passes. No wonder Wilensky, who didn't realize she had Tourette's syndrome and obsessive-compulsive disorder until she was in college, tried so hard

to pass for normal. A graduate of Columbia's M.F.A. writing program, she insightfully and intimately describes the symptoms that emerged during her early school years and soon dominated her life. These tics infuriated her father, who accused her of looking "crazy" and insisted she stop. Increasingly confused, fearing for her sanity and sometimes bullied by her classmates, Wilensky managed to negotiate her way through adolescence. But when, as a Vassar student, she was plagued by insistent compulsions to harm herself, she finally sought psychiatric help. Her diagnosis was both a relief and a challenge, for it forced her to confront her own ambivalence about otherness. "If the tics and rituals were as much a part of me as the mole on the back of my neck," she muses as she considers taking medication, "then eliminating them with a pop of a pill was an eradication of my very soul." Wilensky's emotional honesty and surprising humor make this memoir not only an informative account of diagnosis and treatment, but an exceptionally wise exploration of larger themes of difference and the need to belong. Agent, Amanda Urban, ICM. Author tour. (Aug.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book concerns a frequently misunderstood psychological illness, Tourette's syndrome, which currently afflicts over 200,000 Americans. Contrary to popular belief, not all sufferers exhibit coprolalia (the involuntary utterance of offensive language); common symptoms consist of bizarre vocal and physical tics. Wilensky, a New York writer, has both Tourette's syndrome and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. She describes, in intimate detail, how her life has been circumscribed by her debilitating condition. Transforming the reader into a confidante, she opens the reader's mind and heart to the plight of all Tourettic victims. Her tale is a testament to human courage, hope, and perseverance as well as a heartfelt search for personal identity that redefines the concept of "normalcy." Recommended for all public and academic libraries. AYan Toma & Jessica Wolff, Queens Borough P.L., Flushing, NY Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is a well written book. I do wish that the author would have added a few more chapters about her treatment though.

Very good read with profound knowledge and memoirs of both diseases. I found the parental attacks on the characters as children very saddening.

Very interesting book. A little repetitive but also informing. Makes you humble and remember to appreciate life. Good read and I suggest it!

an interesting look into the life experience of an individual living with obsessive compulsive disorder and tourette's syndrome. good for those studying mental health, or not

Excellent service. I thoroughly enjoyed this book.

This book is wonderful. I have Tourettes and Amy's honest look at her own struggles changed the way I look at myself. For one, she articulated things in ways that I never knew how to. I even asked my husband to read this book so he could better understand what I'm dealing with. Second, through reading this book I realized that I wasn't alone. Having such a rare disorder means that you have to kind of figured things out for yourself because there aren't a lot of people to share your experiences with. Reading Amy's book, I found so many shared experiences and even learned that some of my "idioms" were related to Tourettes and I had no idea! I learned so much about myself through *Passing For Normal!* If you have Tourettes, know someone who does, or just want to hear the story of someone who does, this is the book for you! You'll leave with a better understanding of what Tourettes I'd really like. Not just what Hollywood shows!

This is a great book that really portrays realistically what it's like to have Tourette Syndrome and OCD. I have TS, as well as obsessions that may be OCD or something related, and it was amazing to come across this book. At times it was like *deja vu*, like I was reading about my own life. I honestly have not come across a better book that shows what it's like to struggle with tics and obsessions. As for the review that complained Amy's other book about her sister seemed misleading to not mention her own struggles with Tourette's, I don't see that as a problem. As the title suggests, it is possible to "pass for normal" with this disorder and even have periods where it is not as much of an issue (at least for me, the symptoms tend to wax and wane a lot), and it would have detracted from the clear message in her other book to have to explain what Tourette's is and how it affected her, at best superficially since that wasn't the main focus.

Amy Wilensky tells a powerful first-hand account of living with Tourette syndrome and obsessive compulsive disorder. Amy Wilensky, at the age of 8 years old, began to have symptoms, first there was a tick; her head and neck would jerk. At first it was every once in a while, so Amy could conceal

it sometimes. Then it started getting more intense, causing Amy pain in the form of headaches and a permanently stiff neck, and it became increasingly difficult to hide from anyone. When her father noticed the tics, he was angry. The worst was at mealtime. He would watch her like a sniper and would explode when there was even the slightest movement of her head or neck. He would say "you're head's going to fall off if you don't cut that out!" Things got worse for Amy. Her mind lurched and veered in ways she didn't understand; Amy felt that she must touch wood at all times to ward off harm, and that chewing a wad of stale gum would prevent a plane crash. She would save meaningless scraps of paper, and there were many other occurrences that made Amy feel that she was crazy. I believe that anyone can understand Amy's feelings at having a disease that was undiagnosed for years and what it makes you think of yourself and how it effects your whole life. I was so inspired by the amazing account of Amy's difficult life, and how she was able to make it to where she is today. A very courageous story.

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