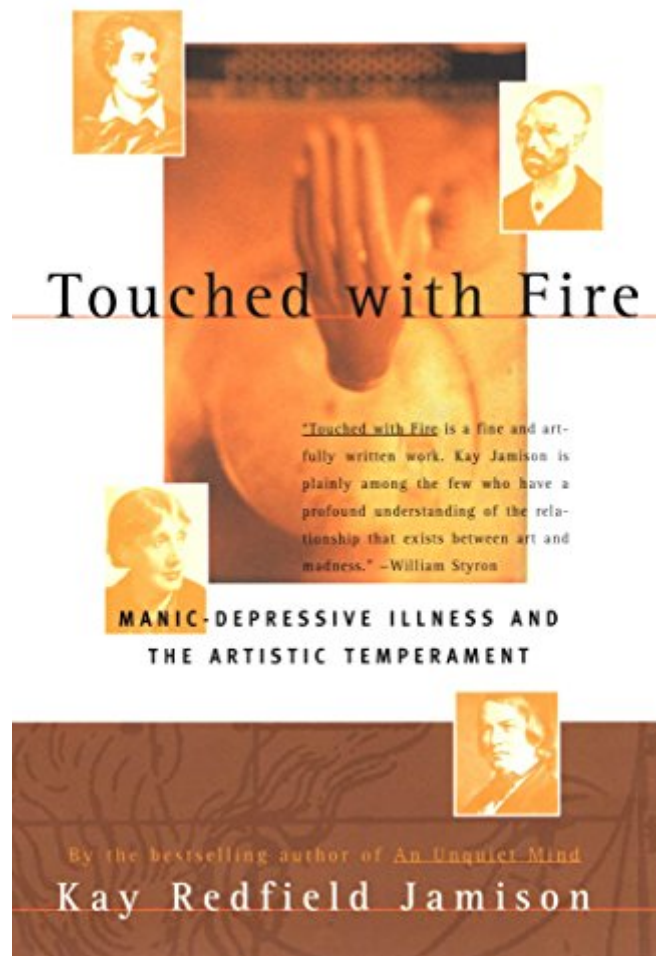


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Touched With Fire: Manic-depressive Illness And The Artistic Temperament



Synopsis

The definitive work on the profound and surprising links between manic-depression and creativity, from the bestselling psychologist of bipolar disorders who wrote >.One of the foremost psychologists in America, â œKay Jamison is plainly among the few who have a profound understanding of the relationship that exists between art and madnessâ • (William Styron). The anguished and volatile intensity associated with the artistic temperament was once thought to be a symptom of genius or eccentricity peculiar to artists, writers, and musicians. Her work, based on her study as a clinical psychologist and researcher in mood disorders, reveals that many artists subject to exalted highs and despairing lows were in fact engaged in a struggle with clinically identifiable manic-depressive illness. Jamison presents proof of the biological foundations of this disease and applies what is known about the illness to the lives and works of some of the world's greatest artists including Lord Byron, Vincent Van Gogh, and Virginia Woolf.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ok...let's get some things straight right off the bat. This book by Jamison is NOT a book meant for

the easy reading of those who are trying to find out more about bipolar disease (whether or not they are merely curious or actually have been diagnosed with it themselves!). This book is an excellent qualitative case studies argument for professionals and peers (in education, in psychology, in neuroscience, in the art world, etc.) who would like to further delve into the long-circulated theory that those blessed with creative abilities are often cursed with manic-depressive (bipolar disorder). Those lay people who merely want confirmation of their illness (or that of a family member) are going to be in for an incredible disappointment if they 'get' this book. It was never intended to be a self-help diary, no matter what Jamison's previous books on bipolar have been like. Next...Jamison makes an excellent case for the link between bipolar disorder and creativity. The methodology she uses tends to be dependent upon case studies of particular artists and the information available from their own writings as well as their family backgrounds and family lineage. It is a well-known fact that many of the psychiatric disorders have both a genetic and an environmental component. Jamison obviously is learned enough and has enough background in neuroscience and psychiatry, to be able to tie the information often gleaned separately in these fields, together in a more comprehensive whole. No, Jamison does not prove beyond a shadow of a doubt the concept that many writers/artists are plagued by bipolarity...but she sure makes a heck of a case for the previously surmised existence of a link!

It's long been considered a fact of life that seems to go with the territory that creative people are not only "abnormal" or "outside the mainstream"--but that many of them are just plain loopy. Doubtless, some of that kind of thinking owes a big debt to the narrowing--and often stereotypical--definitions of "normal" in American society. However, the gradual merging of biology and psychology over the last two decades shows a scientifically verifiable correlation between the "artistic temperament" and "manic-depressive illness." Want to know more about what psychological researchers have been discovering about this long-acknowledged link since the Prozac Revolution? Kay Redfield Jamison, a psychologist at Johns Hopkins, presents as "evidence" a series of recent statistical studies of creative men and women that reveal a definite relationship between the long-ellusive and hard-to-diagnose illness and the personality traits researchers suspect are inherent in successful creative activity. While that's not anything particularly new or groundbreaking--the dry opening chapters are perhaps a little too technical for the information Jamison seeks to convey to a general audience--"Touched With Fire" may help to dispel some of the confusion among "normal" family members and friends who are often too quick to label the artists and writers among them as "messed up" or "weird" or "skitzy."

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