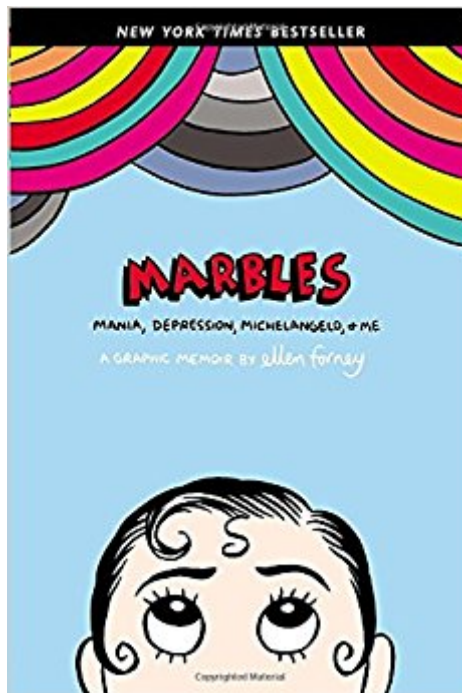




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Marbles: Mania, Depression, Michelangelo, And Me: A Graphic Memoir



Synopsis

Cartoonist Ellen Forney explores the relationship between “crazy” and “creative” in this graphic memoir of her bipolar disorder, woven with stories of famous bipolar artists and writers. Shortly before her thirtieth birthday, Forney was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Flagrantly manic and terrified that medications would cause her to lose creativity, she began a years-long struggle to find mental stability while retaining her passions and creativity. Searching to make sense of the popular concept of the crazy artist, she finds inspiration from the lives and work of other artists and writers who suffered from mood disorders, including Vincent van Gogh, Georgia O’Keeffe, William Styron, and Sylvia Plath. She also researches the clinical aspects of bipolar disorder, including the strengths and limitations of various treatments and medications, and what studies tell us about the conundrum of attempting to “cure” an otherwise brilliant mind. Darkly funny and intensely personal, Forney’s memoir provides a visceral glimpse into the effects of a mood disorder on an artist’s work, as she shares her own story through bold black-and-white images and evocative prose.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Forney, who has garnered both Harvey and Eisner Award nominations for her comic strips and collections that address living happily and mostly safely in alternative cultures (including the call-girl profession), now provides readers with a still-lighthearted but genuinely serious view of her battles

with bipolar disorder. Between 1998 and 2002, she worked with a psychiatrist to diagnose and then treat her manic-depressive swings. In her signature black-and-white cartoons, detailed just enough to pop from the page, Forney takes readers on an insightful and provocative tour of such issues as whether or not artistic creativity is numbed by treatment; the huge expense of psychotropic drugs and difficulty finding health insurance that covers mental health; how treatment has led her to be a better friend, collaborator, and independent earner; and other tributaries stemming from the big question of "What is really going to work to make this better?" A solid choice for mental-health collections as well as those of artists' memoirs and graphic novels.

--Francisca Goldsmith

A Washington Post Best Book of 2012
Named one of the best books of the year by East Bay Express
Named Best Graphic Novel of Fall 2012 by Time
"Brutally honest and deeply moving, the book is by turns dark, mordant, and hilarious. One of this year's best American memoirs."

•Philadelphia Inquirer
"Forney's exhilarating and enlightening autobiographical portrait of her bipolar disorder (otherwise known as manic depression), takes the reader on an emotional rollercoaster. Her clear and thoughtful art provides a powerful, effective and brilliant illumination of this unforgettable adventure."

•Miami Herald
"Ellen Forney's memoir of her bipolar diagnosis and long pharmacologic trek toward balance is painfully honest and joyously exuberant. Her drawings evoke the neuron-crackling high of mania and the schematic bleakness of depression with deft immediacy. Forney is at the height of her powers as she explores the tenuous line between mood disorders and creativity

itself." •Alison Bechdel, author of *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*
"Dense with intellectual and emotional power, Forney's book is a treasure—as a memoir, as an artwork, and as a beautifully conceived and executed commentary on both mental experience and the creative life. With wit, humor, a wicked sense of the absurd, and eloquent insight into the beauty that shines through the mercurial life of the mind, this graphic memoir explores its subject with a

particular precision and power. Forney should be read." •Marya Hornbacher, author of *Madness: A Bipolar Life*
"Ellen's work has always been hilarious and sharp, but *Marbles* has an emotional resonance that shows new depth as an artist and a writer. This is an extremely personal, brave, and rewarding book."

•Dan Savage, editor of *It Gets Better* and author of *The Kid*
"I have always admired Ellen Forney's humor and honesty, but *Marbles* is a major leap forward. It's a hilarious memoir about mental illness, yes, but it's also an incisive study of what it means to be human and how we ache to become better humans. Amazing stuff." •Sherman Alexie,

bestselling author of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*—“Witty and insightful—[The long journey of medication and therapy is kept from gloom by Forney’s lively, likable cartooning —] Readers struggling with their own mania or depression will find Forney good company, and others searching for insight into the minds of troubled artists will find Forney an engaging storyteller.—Starred Publishers Weekly—“Not only does her conversational intimacy draw readers in, but her drawings perfectly capture the exhilarating frenzy of mania and the dark void of depression—]. Forney’s story should resonate with those grappling with similar issues, while her artistry should appeal to a wide readership.—Starred Kirkus Reviews—“Marbles isn’t just a great story; it’s proof that artists don’t have to be tortured to be brilliant.”—Entertainment Weekly, Grade “A” Review—“Is it weird to call a memoir about bipolar disorder entertaining? Well, this one is, thanks to the ease with which Forney translates her vivacious, fearless personality to the page—]. Forney has a virtuosic understanding of what words and images can do in congress, playing them off one another in ways that allow her pages to be more than the sum of their parts.—Myla Goldberg, NPR.org—“Marbles is more than a survivor’s story—] It is a book about Forney’s struggle to come to terms with herself, which is similar to the struggle everyone must undergo.—Los Angeles Times

I must say, that most of my recent "reads" have all been Kindle-Freebies, but when I saw the review on this title in Publishers Weekly, the topic hit so close to home that I clicked through to BUY IT immediately. I literally devoured it in less than 24 hours - the story of her years working through all the ups/downs of bi polar disorder were such a direct correlation of what my husband had to endure, that were it not for her humorous graphic relief in the telling of her own story, I think it would have reduced me to a puddle of tears, remembering all that we went through in the "finding the right meds" process. Thank you Ellen for your open and candid sharing of your journey - as the wife of a bi polar, it really helped me to hear (and literally SEE) the things that my husband has shared with me over the years. So many parallels....I've never read a graphic-style-novel (at least not since my last comic book as a kid) and that is one of the main reasons I wanted to own this one - not only is it a testament to your journey, but a totally unique piece of art as well. Enjoyed it immensely...

Ellen Forney is a gifted artist/cartoonist. She is completely open & honest in this book. Her drawings Vividly represent what it's like to be in the manic & the depressive ends of bipolar disorder--as well

as the lucid times periods in between these attacks. She talks about the risky behaviors such as drug use, alcohol consumption. She admits to the hypersexuality, which affects most people (although mine is more in my mind, rather than acting it out---I was diagnosed with manic-depression at the late age of 45). It is impressive that she struggled through ("soldiered on" as my British mother-in-law would say) until finally (after Years) finding the right combinations of medications/exercise/activities/time alone/therapy that worked for her. She talks about fearing losing her creativity. She didn't. I did. I was an art major & received high marks & praise throughout my art studies from professors & other students. One professor said I was the "most creative student I've had in 30 years." But the medication took away my ability to draw & paint. I can still write & have had poetry published. But just so people know, some of us Do lose our creativity. Thank Heavens Forney didn't lose her talents, this book is a vivid description of what it's like to have bipolar disorder. It is filled with personal stories, data from studies, good books to read about the condition, a lot about famous artists/writers who had this illness (which I very much enjoyed). She, like I am, is a fan of Kay Redfield Jamison. Jamison is the PhD psychiatrist professor at Johns Hopkins who was hospitalized for psychosis during a manic attack while she was in med school. She went on to write many books about brain disorders. One wrong bit of data in the book: Sylvia Plath did not have ECT treatments "all her life." She had them after a suicide attempt while in college. They were administered improperly (not enough tranquilizers, too much electrical power) so that she was awake for the whole thing. She had vowed never to get ECT again & I believe that is part of the reason why she killed herself (there were many reasons, including the fact that she was put on anti-depressants, which can cause a person with manic-depression to go into an extreme mania). I wasn't real fond of the explicit sexual section but it's important for people to know that this type of behavior is part of the manic end of bipolar disorder. It's a complicated condition & Ms. Forney did a Brilliant job of work on this book

I'm a bipolar artist, so I've kind of got a leg up on the subject already, but this graphic novel resonated incredibly well with me when I first read it and I've recently picked it up again during a recent manic episode. I'm glad I did. The author/artist confronts a lot of the common problems and misconceptions that people who have bipolar live with (I'm just my illness, If I get help/medication I'll lose my talent/passion/energy/creativity, Why can't I be normal, is everything I do just bipolar?, etc) and recounts the author's experience facing them. It breaks down the different kinds of disorders on the bipolar spectrum in an easy-to-understand way and is a completely refreshing view on personal experiences with bipolar disorder. I highly recommend this book to anyone I know especially if they

have close ones who are affected by mood disorders or are affected themselves. It's a great way to get into the mindset of someone who is struggling with their emotions on a clinical level and to understand why what they're feeling/doing is so extraordinarily off the charts. Even if you're lucky enough to live a life free of mood disorders, it's a superb example of how people can't just get over it and move on. (Although I doubt she'll see this) Thank you so much, Ellen Forney. Your book gave me lots and lots of inner peace and the motivation to do things that seem wicked scary and I hope it does the same for everyone else who is fortunate enough to read it.

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