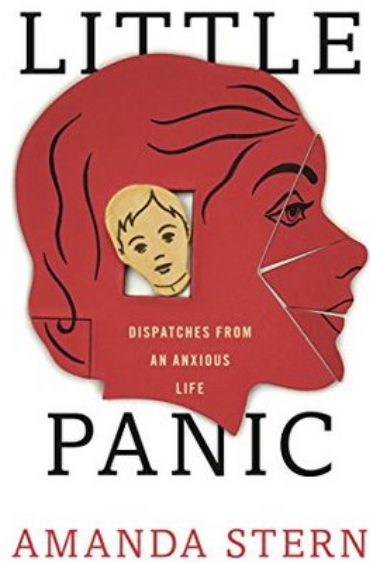




Little Panic: Dispatches from an Anxious Life

Amanda Stern

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In the vein of bestselling memoirs about mental illness like Andrew Solomon's *Noonday Demon*, Sarah Hepola's *Blackout*, and Daniel Smith's *Monkey Mind* comes a gorgeously immersive, immediately relatable, and brilliantly funny memoir about living life on the razor's edge of panic.

The world never made any sense to Amanda Stern--how could she trust time to keep flowing, the sun to rise, gravity to hold her feet to the ground, or even her own body to work the way it was supposed to? Deep down, she knows that there's something horribly wrong with her, some defect that her siblings and friends don't have to cope with.

Growing up in the 1970s and 80s in New York, Amanda experiences the magic and madness of life through the filter of unrelenting panic. Plagued with fear that her friends and family will be taken from her if she's not watching--that her mother will die, or forget she has children and just move away--Amanda treats every parting as her last. Shuttled between a barefoot bohemian life with her mother in Greenwich Village, and a sanitized, stricter world of affluence uptown with her father, Amanda has little she can depend on. And when Etan Patz disappears down the block from their MacDougal Street home, she can't help but believe that all her worst fears are about to come true.

Tenderly delivered and expertly structured, Amanda Stern's memoir is a document of the transformation of New York City and a deep, personal, and comedic account of the trials and errors of seeing life through a very unusual lens.

Little Panic: Dispatches from an Anxious Life Details

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From Reader Review Little Panic: Dispatches from an Anxious Life for online ebook

Liz Willard says

I wanted to read this book because I have several friends who struggle with anxiety, and I hoped this book would provide some insight into anxiety. And wow, did it ever! It was heartbreaking and frustrating to read about Amanda's childhood, as her experiences and struggles were minimized and misdiagnosed. As a parent, I found myself wondering how I would have handled Amanda's repeated questions about the possibilities of things like kidnappings and death, and there is no easy answer. Amanda has lived a fascinating life... a child who is terrified that children can be kidnapped by strangers but is repeatedly told "it won't happen" - and then it does, right in her very neighborhood. Her experiences with adults who took advantage of her in many different ways, her experimentation with drugs and alcohol as a method to minimize the worries in her mind, her desire to have a baby but fear of being able to care for it the way she wants to. It was the rare autobiography that left me wanting more.

Nina says

Wow! Not a brilliant literary word, but the first word that flowed from my hand as I started to write this review. Little Panic is a brilliant, articulate, honest, and heartbreaking memoir about living with crippling anxiety. As detailed in her book, Stern exhibited symptoms of an anxiety disorder from a very young age, but was constantly tested and told she had a learning disability. Chapters in this book segue smoothly between her youth, and life as an adult; this ably demonstrates the lasting impact of generalized anxiety disorder left undiagnosed and untreated for far too many years.

As a psychologist, I wanted to scream at every mental health professional and educator who missed what Stern depicts as very clear symptoms. Perhaps the clarity comes from Stern's growth and insight, as she does share that she did everything she could not to disclose her symptoms for fear of others thinking she was dumb and/or crazy. Yet it really wasn't until Stern was an adult that anybody even suggested an anxiety disorder. The people in Stern's life were too busy trying to "fix" her to really look at who she was. As a mother, I understand the impulse to protect one's child, to make things better and easier, to want your child to fit in, and keep unhappy events from a child who is overly sensitive, even when the manner in which this is accomplished is misguided. As somebody who has a family member living with an anxiety disorder, this book performed open heart surgery without anesthesia.

I find Stern's ability to tell a story impressive. She weaves the cultural events of her life growing up in Greenwich Village into her narrative, showing how they actually exacerbated her anxiety. Ultimately, one of the themes she explores is "normalcy." What is normal? Is a child who learns differently actually disabled? And does labeling cause even more damage, especially when it turns out that the perceived difference isn't one of intelligence or ability, but more one of learning style? It is impossible to read, put down, and walk away from Little Panic.

Disclosure: I requested and received this book as part of the Goodreads Giveaway program.

Zoë says

Honestly, it's hard for me to even fathom the fact that I just read a book about a real person that suffers from the same disorder I do. I feel so validated even though this book was hard to read at times because of how close to home it hit. This book was wonderful in all ways. Thank you Amanda Stern!

Hanna says

Wow, after finishing this book I feel like I need to take a deep breath. As someone who suffers from an anxiety disorder, I found much of what Amanda feels/thinks/experiences mimics my own life. Her story in many ways isn't my own, but so much resonated. Amanda spent years of her life in the depths of panic while doctors searched for the wrong answers. Finally, at the age of 25, she gains a name for what plagues her. It's not a cure, but there's strength in a name. Amanda tells her story alternating from past to present, illuminating all of the ways in which her panic shaped her life. A must read for anyone hoping to better understand what it's like inside an anxious mind.

Roryz says

I'm an anxious person, and though I've never had a full blown panic attack, much of what Stern recounts from her childhood sounds familiar. The anxious, dreadful thoughts that run through little Amanda's mind made my heart break.

Amazing that this girl, who lived in a nice house with a family who loved her, would bob along in panic-filled waters for years, undiagnosed and untreated.

How she turned her life around is truly inspirational.

Stern mentions the disappearance of Etan Patz, a kid from the neighborhood, as an anchoring event in her young life. Confirmation that bad things do happen. Like the Lindbergh kidnapping, this event must have resonated with many anxious kids and their parents. Stern talks about it a lot in the book and I wondered at times if it was excessive, but looking back, I think not.

Andrea Jenkins says

As someone who deals with severe anxiety and was not able to put a name on it for most of their childhood, this book broke me. Reading Amanda's story of a cry for safety and to be understood was something I felt deeply in every page, and could relate to with her breathtaking vulnerability. Her early years are spent trying to find her safe person, someone to give her name to all of these consuming thoughts, while her adult years are spent trying to find someone to accept it. Those of us who suffer from severe anxiety are often told we're just being negative or too worried, but as Amanda shows in this book, anxiety is something so deep in our core and being that the idea of switching it off like a light when we're engulfed by it is so far fetched.

Anyone who has anxiety or loves someone with it should pick up this book because the truth and beauty of someone wrestling with it is felt on every page.

Jess says

Couldn't put this down. Brilliant, heartbreaking, riveting portrayal of growing up in NYC with an undiagnosed panic disorder. I was completely immersed in Amanda's world. Her descriptions of being a child struggling to understand and interact with the world around her were incredibly evocative, as were her descriptions of life growing up in the Village during the 70's/80's. Strongly recommended to anyone who has ever dealt with anxiety or known someone who has, and to anyone else, because it's a really great read.

Kate says

Wow. I have some mild anxiety, and I know and love people who have more severe anxiety and panic attacks, so I guess I thought I had some idea about the struggle of severe anxiety/panic sufferers, but this was a complete eye-opener. Also as a children's librarian (and just as a person probably), her childhood experience just broke my heart. I couldn't stop thinking of all our small patrons and what their internal lives might be like. Highly recommend.

Also another note: It becomes clear about halfway through that this is the author of the Frankly, Frannie series of kids' books! So interesting.

AnnMarie says

Little Panic is a memoir of panic and anxiety. I have generalized anxiety disorder and this book was like a therapy session. It's always nice to know you're not alone in the world of anxiety.

Nick Stern says

BOOK OF THE YEAR!!

Jen says

An insightful and incredibly vulnerable look into Amanda's life. Very appreciative that authors like Amanda are willing to share their stories to help those who suffer similarly from anxiety.

Daisy says

This is a must read for anyone who suffers with anxiety! It is brave, brilliant, and honest. I could relate in so many ways that my dog got tired of me screaming "Me too!". This book should have been written by the psychiatric community years ago, thankfully Amanda Stern has finally written the book we have been craving. She is so correct that age, understanding, self-acceptance all lead to greater compassion and empathy for those people (and animals) around us. Brava Ms. Stern!!! ??????????

Emily Jordan says

A STUNNING, evocative story about the meaning of living with an undiagnosed panic disorder, LITTLE PANIC grips and discomfits in the best way. Stern's honesty is compelling, her humor always spot on. She is a consummate New Yorker from the last moments when New York was still gritty and still had that thing called a soul and kids ran around unfettered by adult supervision. At turns moving, sad, funny and always entertaining, the book shifts seamlessly between adulthood and childhood. These layers convey a woman who is still an eight year old and a child who is wise beyond her years, sometimes dangerously so. (Sometimes the teacher in me wanted to dive into the book and save her!) Ultimately, the book is an examination of life and loss from two perspectives that show how-- and where-- panic nestles in the crevices of experience and what it means to look back and forth and make sense of it all. LOVED this book!

Tracy says

Memoirs of anxiety are exhausting to read.

Emily Housworth says

received as an ARC. Can't wait to read!
