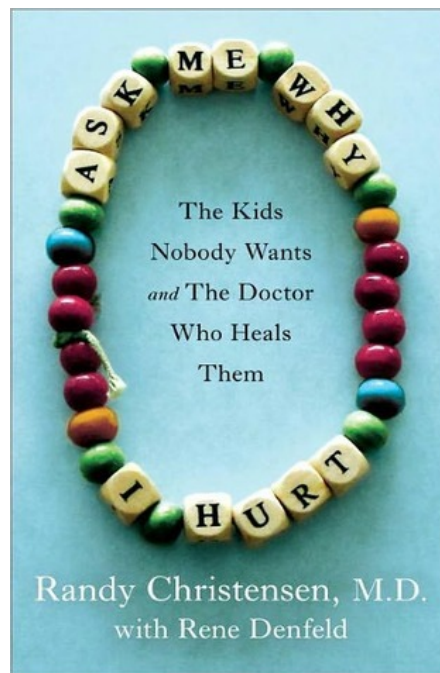




Ask Me Why I Hurt

Randy Christensen

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Ask Me Why I Hurt Randy Christensen

The unforgettable inspiring memoir of one extraordinary doctor who is saving lives in a most unconventional way *Ask Me Why I Hurt* is the touching and revealing first-person account of the remarkable work of Dr. Randy Christensen. Trained as a pediatrician, he works not in a typical hospital setting but, rather, in a 38-foot Winnebago that has been refitted as a doctor's office on wheels. His patients are the city's homeless adolescents and children.

In the shadow of one affluent American city, Dr. Christensen has dedicated his life to caring for society's throwaway kids—the often-abused, unloved children who live on the streets without access to proper health care, all the while fending off constant threats from thugs, gangs, pimps, and other predators. With the Winnebago as his moveable medical center, Christensen and his team travel around the outskirts of Phoenix, attending to the children and teens who need him most.

With tenderness and humor, Dr. Christensen chronicles everything from the struggles of the van's early beginnings, to the support system it became for the kids, and the ultimate recognition it has achieved over the years. Along with his immense professional challenges, he also describes the trials and joys he faces while raising a growing family with his wife Amy. By turns poignant, heartbreaking, and charming, Dr. Christensen's story is a gripping and rich memoir of his work and family, one of those rare books that stays with you long after you've turned the last page.

From the Hardcover edition.

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From Reader Review Ask Me Why I Hurt for online ebook

Courtney says

Really good, but really sad at points (though given the topic that can hardly come as a surprise). There's at least one point if not more per chapter that could easily set the reader off crying.

It's all about how for the last 12 years Dr. Randy Christensen has been working to provide health care for youth in the Arizona state who are otherwise unable to get health care. A lot of the time the children/teens are homeless, living on the streets or staying with friends because even as dangerous as living on the streets is, it's often safer for them than being at home. Dr. Randy writes about some of the children he's worked with, and the issues they've had to face. He also writes about the issues he's had in getting healthcare for them - whether lack of funding for medication, or the kids being unable to get insurance and therefore being unable to get treatment. He also talks about his life and family and what was going on while developing the program and getting the mobile treatment centre started up and running.

Rebecca Craddock says

“What I had not envisioned was being soaked in hydraulic fluid, the nurse-practitioner I respected radiating disappointment to me, and a tsunami of doubt flooding my heart” (Christensen 21). Randy Christensen’s dream was to run his own mobile medical unit, but this came with many complications and expenses. The old van needs a major tune-up, special equipment and a small staff before reaching the road. Christensen tells of the hardships and horrors, as well as the lessons and learning opportunities. He meets thousands of amazing clients and works with many volunteer nurses. From sexual abuse, to brain damage, to prostitution, his wife is alongside him every step of the way. However, Amy has troubles of her own. After a gruesome miscarriage, she struggles through an unpleasant premature birth of twins and another later, for her third premature child. As if this busy life isn’t enough for the Christensen’s, Randy works long hours on the van and spends extra time at camps. Dr. Christensen’s inspiring story unfolds in *Ask Me Why I Hurt*. Christensen’s nonfiction book is one of a kind and his only publication. His motivating story of never giving up is one that many teenagers and adults won’t be able to put down. The lesson of everlasting effort and hope radiates throughout the entire book. Although, Christensen may not be the strongest in his writing ability, he can still portray the story of his journey in a way that intrigues many readers. Personally, I adored *Ask Me Why I Hurt* and I felt as though I knew the characters just as Christensen did. Through every city, every child, and every calamity, I was there giving my support. I recommend this book to any admirers of the uplifting Mitch Albom novels, or to anyone who enjoys helping children.

Sharon says

I've become a great fan of memoirs over time, particularly those about people who go about making a difference in the world around them. First-person accounts of the struggles that often come with doing the proverbial right thing are strengthening to me.

Randy Christensen, MD, has written just such a memoir. "*Ask Me Why I Hurt*" is the story of how he and a couple of colleagues start a mobile clinic to help the homeless youth of Phoenix, most of whom live in dire situations. Some of them are runaways, some of them are thrown out of their homes, some are victims of

sexual and physical abuse. The range of illnesses runs from cockroaches embedded in ears to STDs to MRSA.

Christensen is, at first, determined not to become personally involved in his patients' cases, but he fails -- sometimes to the detriment of his own family life (miscarriages and family issues are discussed in the book, too). As he details the Catch-22 of trying to get long-term care for kids in need (e.g., they can't get Medic-Aid or similar assistance without ID, but can't get ID without a copy of an unobtainable birth certificate), Christensen ably demonstrated to me the need for true and comprehensive health care reform in this country.

Christensen's book was almost impossible to put down. He sheds light on the problems of youth homelessness in this country, and shares the story of some real heroes (for example, a pastor who takes in one of the homeless kids who has been so abused that he has brain damage, and the nurse practitioner whom many of the kids come to view as a mother figure).

Highly recommended for memoir fans and others with an interest in the subject matter.

(Review based on uncorrected advance proof.)

Megan says

My husband works in the mental health field for a company which specializes in vulnerable groups. He doesn't work with patients directly, but it's made me interested in the topic. When I saw this book about Dr. Christensen, working in Arizona with one of the most vulnerable groups out there, I knew I needed to read it.

This book is a very interesting look at "Dr. Randy"'s journey setting up his mobile clinic, getting to know the needs of the people he serves, and how he deals with juggling his home life with his work. It's obvious Dr. Randy is very dedicated - it comes across very well in this book.

The fact that most of the events in this book take place in the Valley, around Phoenix, Tempe, and even into Mesa, really brought it home for me. I recognized a lot of what he was talking about and even the weather patterns made me more able to relate to this book.

I'm glad I read this.

Nichelle says

I am not a doctor and know nothing about what it takes to take care of someone but this book makes me wish I knew so I could help him out! Randy Christensen's journey of his medical bus is an incredibly inspiring story that will make anyone wish they could get help out in some way.

This book is all about Christensen's journey of his medical bus as well as everything else that went along in his life. I knew the life of a doctor included long hours and heart wrenching tales but the stories of the homeless children and teenagers touched me deeply. As a teacher, I can completely understand wanting to help out as much as possible to make their lives better. The book chronicles how difficult it is to make kids seek the help they may desperately need and it makes people aware of the difficulties these kids face everyday. Most importantly though, it shows that these changes CAN happen and SHOULD happen. These kids are important to our future and they can be reached and helped, they just need someone to try and be

persistent, like Dr. Randy (as the kids call him).

I highly recommend this book! It's a very fast read and it's one that you really don't want to end. The best part is, his journey is still ongoing. I'm hoping for a second book in the future!

Rae says

I generally enjoy medical non-fiction, and this was an easy read within the genre. Dr. Christensen's story of serving homeless adolescents through a mobile medical clinic is inspiring and admirable. There is no doubt that his work is significant.

That being said, I found the book sappy and tedious. How do you write truly interesting non-fiction? Facts are facts, so it must be in the manner of writing. I became bored with the serial obstacles as they were presented and surmounted. I suspect that newspaper reporters have covered this story with greater entertainment appeal.

I recognize the great work that the pediatrician has performed, and wanted to enjoy the book more than I did.

Nancy Kennedy says

I don't think I've ever read a book that made me feel more like a slug than this story of Dr. Randy Christensen and his work among homeless teens in a mobile medical clinic in Phoenix.

When his hospital begins to talk about founding a mobile medical van to reach homeless children, Dr. Christensen jumps at the chance to start the work. He motors around the bad parts of town aboard his converted Winnebago, battles skeptical medical and government bureaucracies and fundraises for grants and donations to keep the perpetually cash-strapped medical van going. He works at a camp for diabetic children and dutifully does his rounds at the hospital. He works from sunup to way past sundown, dragging his tired and hungry self home day after day, burdened by the sorrows he sees on the street.

What amazed me most was that Dr. Christensen came to his calling in his 30s, after he has finished his medical training, married and is starting his practice and a family. While your 30s can certainly be considered young, it is also the time of life when most of us have already immersed ourselves in our marginally meaningful lives and couldn't summon up the energy to do just one of the things Dr. Christensen does with his life. More power to him!

This is an inspiring story of one man's battles with the pull of the street, the intractability of the healthcare system and government safety nets that are failing his kids, and the daily challenges of a cutting edge medical mission. His stories of kids like Nicole, Sugar, Matt, Donald and Nizhoni will linger in your heart long after you've closed the book. The stories of their successes are inspiring, but the stories of lives that end in tragedy are equally heartwrenching.

Toward the end of the book, I began to feel sorry for the doctor's family, as his wife and three kids obviously took a back seat to his work. I could barely read the story of one of his wife's miscarriages and Dr. Christenson's near-fatal neglect. I'm glad I read to the end of the book, though, as on the tenth anniversary of the mobile clinic he seems to have realized that he needed to cut back and attend to his own family. Again, more power to Dr. Christensen!

Shauni says

Dr. Randy Christensen operates a mobile doctor's office, converted from a Winnebago, that he drives around the Phoenix area to see to the medical needs of homeless children and young adults. I first heard about *Ask Me Why I Hurt* on NPR's Diane Rehm Show, where Dr. Christensen was a guest. I immediately requested his book from the library, and my husband Jordan and I read it aloud together. Jordan says Randy Christensen is his new hero!

This book hit close to home on a number of different levels:

- 1) We live in Phoenix, where Dr. Christensen operates his mobile clinic. It's one thing to read about children suffering on the other side of the world (e.g. Afghanistan), and quite another to discover how many children are neglected, abandoned, and even homeless in our own backyard!
- 2) Jordan will be starting medical school in a couple weeks, and even though his career will likely be much different from Dr. Christensen's, even if he goes into pediatrics, this book still gave us a good idea of what to expect.
- 3) In addition to describing his work on the van, Dr. Christensen also spends a good deal of the book discussing work-life balance, and how he and his wife Amy, also a pediatrician, learned how to manage the stresses of work while raising a family at the same time. It was comforting for me to realize that if we plan carefully and don't get involved in too many "extras," Jordan still will be able to be involved in our children's lives as they grow, even though medicine is such a demanding field. I love Dr. Christensen's suggestions for "How to Help" at the end of the book. The #1 suggestion is "Spend time with your children."

This is one of those books that I can't help but talk about with *everyone*. It seems to just come up in every conversation (i.e. "Have you heard of the book *Ask Me Why I Hurt*? It's incredible!") I hope it becomes a bestseller!

Meredith says

I received this book through the Goodreads First-Reads giveaway. This review pertains to the uncorrected ARC of, "tell Me Why I Hurt."

Rating: 2.5 stars

I really wanted to like Randy Christensen's memoir. it tells the important and often ignored story of homeless youth, and the people that do their best to help reverse the situation. However, the book read less like a memoir and more like a novel. There was detail overkill. For example, knowing that his wife had coconut and vanilla scented shampoo was not germane to the subject matter. Something I found annoying was that simple/common medical terms were explained within the text, but others were not. I finished the book and do not know what a, "D & C" is.

I felt the memoir would have been stronger if Christiansen focused more on his interactions with s the main street kids: Donald, Mary, Sugar, and Nicole.

While the novel-esque feel was not my cup of tea, I do think the overall story (REALITY) sheds light on an important issue. I recommend this book to professionals that work with at-risk youth.

Elizabeth? says

let me preface this review by saying that i used to work at a shelter for homeless youth. thus i found christensen's story intriguing.

he is a doctor that has set up a mobile unit in the phoenix and surrounding areas for homeless youth under the age of 25.

he discusses the highs and lows of setting up the practice and of learning how to assist these transient youth.

these are kids that fall through the cracks and are abused sexually, physically and mentally. not all of the stories end in tragedy and those that don't give you hope that perhaps having one or two people that show concern can truly make a difference.

dr. randy, as he is known by his clients, makes these kids feel like they matter simply because he shows up week after week and asks them, "how are you doing?"

i also like how he interweaves his personal life and the difficulties he and his wife experienced with getting pregnant. and once pregnant, the difficulty of the pregnancies themselves.

while the writing here is a bit ordinary, the stories themselves are compelling enough to keep you reading.

Jenny says

Wonderful - wonderful - wonderful! This is the perfect book for someone who has it in them to fight for the safety and wellness of our children, but maybe wasn't sure where they could be helpful. This book is an in-depth look at what is so broken with our current systems and the millions of helpless children that are being left out and denied basic necessities because of this current system. Heartbreaking to think that a country with the strengths and resources we have can let a whole population of children just die ... I have never been able to associate myself with either major political party, even more so now.

I highly recommend this book - it is a strong motivator to reach out to those in need right here in our own home towns. There are more kids than we realize that need someone to give them love and hope, there are so many kids that have been treated so cruelly and they just NEED some adult somewhere to treat them with kindness. Sometimes I get so worked up about problems all over the world, but I need to look at the problems closer to home a little more - I can do something about those.

Anyhow I can't say enough about this - I am so glad I read this - it was something I needed.

Kaje Harper says

If you are very squeamish, or if you enjoy being complacent, this book is not for you. For the rest of us, this

is the fascinating and distressing true story of Dr. Randy Christensen, a pediatrician who began a mobile medical clinic to treat the homeless children of Phoenix. It is the story of ten years of individual successes and deep commitment, against the backdrop of infuriating neglect.

There are some stories of individual youngsters here. You meet Sugar, a teen prostitute whose resilience slowly dims over years on the street. And Nicole, a teenage girl with a history of severe abuse and multiple personality disorder so extreme that her real name is unknown, but who becomes 8-year-old Becca in the safety of Dr. Christensen's Winnebago clinic. Or Donald, who is developmentally delayed, perhaps because of genetics but perhaps because of the multiple skull fractures from being hit with a board by his father. But you don't get to know too many individuals, because most of the 7,000 kids treated over the span of the book walk away and never come back, leaving only the hope that they are doing okay somewhere out there.

So mostly this is the story of Dr. Randy and his desire to save everyone he can, in the midst of a personal life that includes pregnancy complications for his wife, premature infants, and severe illness for his sister and mother. Oh, and volunteering in Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina. By all rights, the man should have had a breakdown and a bleeding ulcer by the middle of the book, but thank God there are people who can do this work and not falter.

Reading the book, you can't help but get angry at the screwed up priorities in our society that let us spend billions on cell-phone ring tones, but keep these kids from getting even basic health care. They face numerous Catch-22's. They need a liquid medication, but have no refrigeration to keep it effective. They are eligible for medical assistance, but only if they have ID. They could get ID with a birth certificate, but some kids were out on the streets so young they don't even remember their birthdays or where they were born. For others, getting that information would require confronting the same parents whose neglect or abuse drove them out in the first place. And if they can get ID, then they still have to find a doctor who will take them on as a patient. In our private health-care system, geared to big-money insurance companies, there is no requirement for doctors to accept patients on assistance. The author is remarkably restrained in avoiding lectures about the failures of our health care system. He just makes you feel them, case after heartbreaking case.

Ironically, for some kids the best way to get medical care is to commit a crime bad enough to be sent to jail. But even then they either face incarceration, or if the charges are dropped they are kicked back out on the street with two days of medication and no hope of getting more. Shelters are full and wait-listed, and can be dangerous places especially as the kids hit 18 and are forced to consider adult shelters. So these kids live in holes and squats, and get infections, and respiratory diseases, and live roaches in their ears, and rat bites.

These kids die of simple ear infections! And yet they show amazing resilience. How Christensen can write this book and maintain a positive tone I don't know, but it is filled with optimism against the odds. As he says in the post-script, it makes you want to volunteer, donate, vote...and spend more time with your own children. I'm going to go hug my kid now.

T.A. Noonan says

I want to like this book a lot more than I do. It is an easy, enjoyable read that brings attention to a little-known problem in this country. Ultimately, however, I find myself troubled by its focus. This should be a book about "the kids nobody wants," a wake-up call to those fortunate enough to have the luxury of reading about -- instead of living a life defined by -- homelessness. Ultimately, though, this is a story about "the

doctor who heals [the kids nobody wants]," and while I admire Dr. Christensen's dedication and hard work, I can't help but be frustrated by the book's near-constant focus on *his* life, *his* struggles, *his* triumphs.

It's a shame, really, as this book is engrossing when it concentrates on the children. I don't believe it was Dr. Christensen's intention to make himself the center of this book; everything he says and does suggests that he wants to help others, not himself. Still, the effect is problematic. Instead of providing deeper insights into the larger world these children inhabit, he paints a portrait of his efforts -- one that just happens to also include the children he helps. His portrait is also a sentimental one, and while I'm a sucker for a good tug at the heartstrings, I resent it when I can see the hands wrapping those strings and tugging oh-so-hard.

That said, I was impressed enough to want to read the book again and motivated enough to get more involved in community service. I can't think of too many books that can accomplish that.

Nadia Day says

Written by one of my mentors , this is a book everyone should read.

Jeanne says

If I were going by content alone, I'd probably rate this book higher. The information contained in it is really quite riveting, but the style is more honest than engrossing. Christensen makes himself sound like a bit of bumbler, and I guess that makes sense because at times that must be how he felt. I think he does a good job of getting across the "now"-ness of the story. He's looking back on a decade worth of work but he brings us along for the ride, so to speak, rather than just reminiscing from his current consciousness.

The ride is Christensen's work in setting up and running a mobile clinic for homeless kids in Arizona. We're introduced to and follow the stories of a couple of kids that Christensen sees in his practice as well as Christensen's own life and struggles.

In all, it serves as a reminder to people and a call to battle for those who want to take up arms for the homeless and unserved people in our nation. With a section on his work in post-Katrina Louisiana and highlighted in the plight of his patients who fall through the cracks of the health-care/insurance system, Christensen is appalled at our country's inability to manage crises. You clearly feel his "This should not be happening in this country which is so great" attitude.
