

I am old school, like turning the pages of a real book, and marking the place where I left off. Sometimes to think. Having said that, Bruce Ario's novel is a page turner. You could, and maybe should, sit down and read it straight through, beginning to end.

For my Fairweather Lodge members and prospects, I will be recommending they read it for inspiration.

Who is Brad, the main character? What happened to him? What's his life like? What does he say? At the same time, what is he thinking? What is he experiencing? Ario takes you on Brad's journey from the onset of his trauma, playing an outdoor game with his friends, and serious mental illness. You feel the reality of the unreal. You are living in a dream, while walking around in life, fully functional, yet no one knows it or sees it. His writing style allows you to fully absorb the story. Easily keep track of the conversations.

For readers who do not have a diagnosed mental illness, they will get a sense of what it is like. Life is complex. The conversations that go on in a person's head at the same time they are trying to carry on. Somehow Brad does it through both sheer will, faith and humor. He's driven to accomplish a genuine life for a higher purpose.

While reading this book, I saw myself. Many of the questions that Brad asks himself or the things he thinks, and ritual practices I can relate to (e.g., general prayer for others). In *Power of 8*, Lynne Taggart writes " [Her} story is, partly, about what happens to a person when the rules one has lived by change and the miraculous power [we] hold within ourselves... to heal [our] own live(s)... the moment we stop thinking about ourselves."

At one point, I began to think of my life in its entirety and realize some deeply secret part of me is like Brad. Yet, if I had never read this book, would I have made the connection? Other readers will share this experience.

Relationships. Powerfully connecting with another human being is something you never forget. In the absence of some relationships we might wonder what life would have been like had we not had them. Would our lives have been better or worse or different? Throughout Brad's story, we want to know more about Sally. From beginning to end, Sally is omnipresent. She's a curiosity. You don't have to have a diagnosis to have had someone in your life, even briefly, that is still somewhere there trapped between neurons. That emotion that settles into the background that we call up from time to time to relive, reflect, feel that feeling again, good and bad.

Recently, I saw a film about Stephen Hawking's life, loves, and family called *Theory of Everything*. Yes, he was a titan of astrophysics, but it's his life that is more interesting. How is it that he comes to a conclusion that there is no God, no Heaven, no afterlife? How does this all impact his life, his family? We are left to think that it's all mathematics. As a universe emerged, it will eventually collapse into nothingness from which it sprang.

For this reader, something bigger than all of us is central. Our minds and consciousness defy mathematical expression. We process information uniquely like no other species. We have ambitions, goals, reasons to live a life. For Brad, we can plainly see his beliefs and direction. In the end, he is drawn to the positive. He finds hope.