

that alternated between straightjackets and cold packs. Perry Baird experienced much of his treatment as “torture” devised by “state hospital psychiatrists.”

Historical figures in psychiatry make their appearance. Dr. Baird came from a family of means, and he was able to get a specially arranged consultation. Harry Solomon, who was superintendent of the Boston Psychopathic Hospital and who subsequently became the Massachusetts Commissioner of Mental Health, came to see him at WSH. Dr. Solomon opined, “The manic does not know what he is doing,” and Perry Baird’s response was “Even a man of distinction, experience and education could fail to understand the manic.”

Perry Baird was transferred from WSH to Balpate Hospital, a private psychiatric hospital, where his attending psychiatrist was a friend and colleague. He lasted there but two weeks. His property destruction and threats to nursing staff were too much for the private hospital, and he was sent back to WSH. Three weeks after his return to WSH, Perry Baird was notified that his license to practice medicine had been revoked.

Perry Baird had a great disdain for the treatment he received at WSH: “WSH and other places like it have nothing to offer; nothing but a jail-like incarceration, brutality, and ugliness. The patients who come here recover not because of the treatment they receive, but in spite of it. Some are submerged by it, die of it.” After about one month of this final WSH admission, Perry Baird gets his freedom by escaping.

Perry Baird tried and failed to connect with earlier acquaintances. He tried and failed to connect with his daughter, Mimi. He described his feelings of being victimized by stigma against people with a mental illness. He found refuge in alcohol. He died alone in a hotel room in Detroit at the age of 55.

The better part of the book is Mimi Baird speaking of her life, which constitutes the last one-third of the book. It turns out Mimi’s mother had the same experience as she did—a father with bipolar disorder who left the family when his daughter was a child (in this earlier instance the daughter was ten, and her father spent the rest of his life in Norristown State Hospital). Part of Mimi Baird’s story is her quest to put together her father’s life—hospitalizations at Boston Psychopathic Hospital and Butler Hospital before the admittance to WSH and later, Galveston State Hospital. Ms. Baird learns that her father, a dermatologist, made a quite significant contribution to the psychiatric literature. I suggest you check it out: [http://journals.lww.com/jonmd/citation/1944/04000/biochemical\\_component\\_of\\_the\\_manic\\_depressive.3.aspx](http://journals.lww.com/jonmd/citation/1944/04000/biochemical_component_of_the_manic_depressive.3.aspx).

And then get a copy of *He Wanted the Moon*. There’s a lot more here than in many first-person accounts.

**Jeffrey L. Geller, M.D., M.P.H.**

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*The reviewer reports no financial relationships with commercial interests.*

*Psychiatric Services 2016; 67:e12–e13; doi: 10.1176/appi.ps.671006*

## Unhinged: A Memoir of Enduring, Surviving, and Overcoming Family Mental Illness

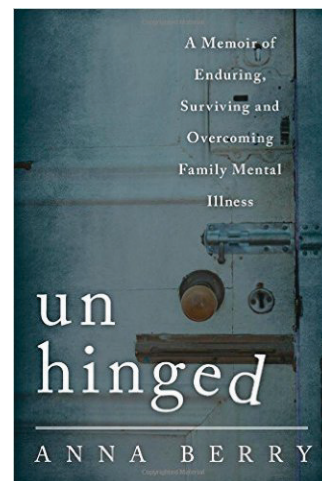
by Anna Berry; New York, Rowman and Littlefield Publishing, 2014, 221 pages

*Unhinged*, by Anna Berry (a pseudonym), is described as a memoir about the author’s difficult childhood, the mental illnesses of her mother and brother (both with diagnosed schizophrenia), the author’s own struggles with psychiatric symptoms, and her path to wellness and a fulfilling life. Ms. Berry, the flyleaf tells us, is a successful journalist, author, and mental health advocate. Certainly, mental health awareness and treatment have benefited greatly from memoirs written by people with lived experience of mental illness, including William Styron, Elyn Saks, and Kay Jamison. I had high hopes for *Unhinged*.

Ms. Berry describes her particularly chaotic childhood, when her mother was extremely ill. Ms. Berry gives her own psychiatric diagnosis as borderline personality disorder and recounts several destructive relationships and periods of extremely self-defeating behavior. She also describes episodes of depression and what she refers to as a brief psychotic episode. She recounts some very negative experiences with psychiatrists who did not listen to her and who prescribed irresponsibly; these are stories that need to be told. Ms. Berry also points to important and familiar problems with the mental health system, including difficulty with access to care and the relationship between psychiatry and Big Pharma. She advocates for the effective tool of cognitive-behavioral therapy.

Ms. Berry’s memoir fell far short of my expectations, however; its use of stigmatizing language and lack of a real recovery orientation are disappointing. To the author, “mental health consumers” is “a politically correct term for psychiatric patients.” Stigmatizing language occurs throughout the book (Ms. Berry describes herself as a “nutjob”) and made me cringe. She titled the chapter on her brother “Mark: The Lost Cause” and refers to him as a “lazy, manipulative delusional-paranoid schizophrenic.” In the memoir *Glass Castles*, Jeannette Walls manages a compassion for family members living with mental illness that serves to make her story more poignant and effective. Ms. Berry’s memoir almost completely lacks compassion, and her depiction of her brother seems vindictive. It is almost as if Ms. Berry believes in her own recovery but has little respect for that process in others.

I appreciate the fact that Ms. Berry has made great progress toward her own recovery. She describes herself as having a good life. I wish that she had been aware of the



power of language and been less stigmatizing and judgmental, particularly in writing about her brother. As it is, this is not a book that I can recommend.

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*The reviewer reports no financial relationships with commercial interests.*

*Psychiatric Services 2016; 67:e13–e14; doi: 10.1176/appi.ps.671007*

## Mermaid: A Memoir of Resilience

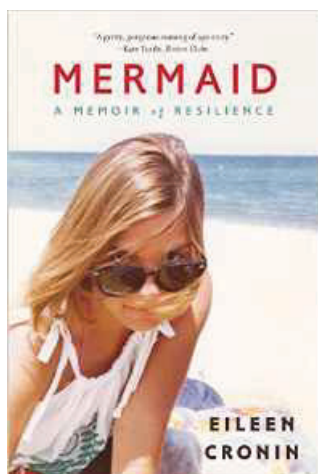
by Eileen Cronin; New York, W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2014, 334 pages

*Mermaid* is a humorous memoir detailing the dynamics of a girl growing up in a large Catholic family during the 1960s and 1970s. She faces struggles typical of most childhoods, such as dealing with bullies, heartache, pain, self-discovery, and finding her place in the world. However, she does this all without legs.

Ms. Cronin was three when she first realized she was different. Prior to this moment, she “squiddled” around without awareness of her unique situation in life. When she was older, she was fitted with prosthetics. These are the source of many humorous tales throughout the memoir, which takes the reader through her struggles to navigate the various stages of adolescence.

Ms. Cronin was eight when her mother began her long battle with mental illness and was hospitalized for the first time. Ms. Cronin describes the slow loss of her mother during these periods and the lasting effects of various medications and shock treatments. Their once “slick” mother with “razor sharp comebacks” was lost and replaced by a woman who “no longer walked; she careened.” Ms. Cronin was hesitant around her mother as a result, and it complicated matters when searching for answers about her legs. She had long suspected her mother of taking the drug thalidomide during her pregnancy. However, her mother routinely denied this, instead telling her that her lot in life was God’s will. This unknown created much angst for Ms. Cronin and brought up many concerns regarding marriage and childbearing.

As Ms. Cronin progressed through college and continued her path of self-discovery, she grew apart from her family and continued to challenge its strict Catholic views. She battled alcohol addiction after a brother, to whom she was very close, passed away. This addiction later led to a failed marriage and very dark place for Ms. Cronin. Searching for hope and looking to help others like herself, she began



volunteering at hospitals, which eventually led to a doctoral degree in clinical psychology. This memoir of trials and tribulations ends in a place of peace, when she finds true acceptance from her second husband and a daughter of her own.

In the end, Ms. Cronin’s wit continuously shines through, and she shows us that with humor and honesty, people can conquer most things in life, no matter how tragic. This book would be of interest to anyone in the mental health field or to those working with physical disabilities.

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*The reviewer reports no financial relationships with commercial interests.*

*Psychiatric Services 2016; 67:e14; doi: 10.1176/appi.ps.671008*

## Brave: A Painfully Shy Life

by Helen Rivas-Rose; Kennebunk, Maine, Periwinkle Publishing, 2015, 220 pages

The author of *Brave* states, “I wrote my memoir to explore the nature of severe shyness. . . . Although it was dreadfully difficult to relive the emotions, I spent nine years describing my innermost side in order to reveal the hurt, depression, sadness, and the waste of time and energy that severe shyness causes. From time to time, I insert some poems . . . to illustrate the freedom my mind can now to enjoy roaming outside of the self.”

She writes of “a lifetime marred by shyness” and provides a self-help guide of sorts for overcoming it. The author has persuaded me to conclude that she has accomplished her arduous mission:

The notion of *Brave* came to me while climbing a long, steep hill on a hot day between sessions. Suddenly I envisioned a wooden nickel with the word “brave” on one side and “shyness” on the other side. I loved it instantly because it illustrated that shyness and bravery are two sides of the same coin—it is difficult to be brave, but that’s what it initially takes to overcome shyness. However, I find that once I conquered shyness, I no longer need to endure being brave.

The book is well written and easy to read, but it can be emotionally draining and may necessitate a break or two. The author describes her experiences with shyness with exquisite sensitivity, challenging me to pay attention by evoking thoughts of my own struggles with shyness. I have begun to encourage my colleagues to peruse this book to enhance our assessment and treatment skills, and I have

