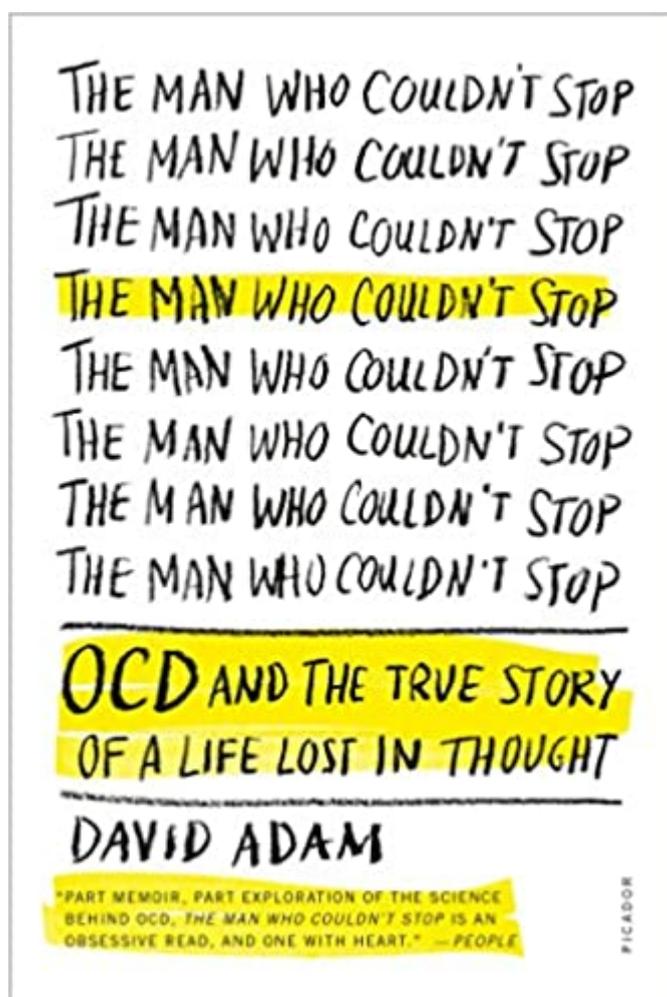


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The Man Who Couldn't Stop: OCD And The True Story Of A Life Lost In Thought



Synopsis

Winner of the Medical Journalists' Association's Tony Thistlethwaite Award
Finalist for the Royal Society Winton Prize for Science Books
Recipient of the International OCD Foundation's Illumination Award
What might lead a schoolgirl to eat a wall of her house, piece by piece, or a man to die beneath an avalanche of household junk that he and his brother have compulsively hoarded? At what point does a harmless idea, a snowflake in a clear summer sky, become a blinding blizzard of unwanted thoughts? David Adam can edit at Nature and an accomplished science writer has suffered from obsessive-compulsive disorder for twenty years, and *The Man Who Couldn't Stop* is his unflinchingly honest attempt to understand the condition and his experiences. In this riveting and intimate blend of science, history, and memoir, Adam explores the weird thoughts that exist within every mind and explains how they drive millions of us toward obsession and compulsion. Told with fierce clarity, humor, and urgent lyricism, *The Man Who Couldn't Stop* is a haunting story of a personal nightmare that shines a light into the darkest corners of our minds.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Adam is a companionable Virgil, guiding the reader through the hellish circles of the disorder, explaining scientific concepts in clear, nontechnical prose . . . For sufferers, the thirst for relief from intrusive thoughts and compulsions can be unending and, ultimately, unquenchable. David Adam's book should provide them with consolation (you are not alone) and hope

(he's much better now) and it provides all readers with a fascinating glimpse of an unusual but enduring form of psychopathology. Scott Stossel, *The New York Times Book Review* "Adam provides a compelling, often frightening, description of the havoc OCD can wreak. He also provides hope that while OCD can derail even the most placid life, it can be overcome. USA Today "[A] remarkable account of obsessive-compulsive disorder Seattle Times "[A] searing account . . . The mental-disorder memoir . . . has become its own genre, and works such as Elizabeth Wurtzel's *Prozac Nation*, Andrew Solomon's *The Noonday Demon* and most recently Scott Stossel's *My Age of Anxiety* set a high standard. In *The Man Who Couldn't Stop*, Adam more than meets it, writing with honesty, compassion and even humor about a malady so often stigmatized and caricatured. The Washington Post "A compelling portrait . . . This is the most comprehensive and compassionate book on OCD to date, and it offers hope that our thinking and behavior both individual and collective can change. Los Angeles Times "Part memoir, part exploration of the science behind OCD, *The Man Who Couldn't Stop* is an obsessive read and one with heart. People "With the wry wit of a natural storyteller and the mastery of a science writer at the top of his game, David Adam takes readers deep into the inner workings of the obsessive brain, hijacked by uncontrollable, unwanted thoughts. *The Man Who Couldn't Stop* is at once a fascinating exploration of the latest neuroscience, a rollicking history of the often truly misguided attempts to heal broken minds, and a courageous chronicle of Adam's own journey from shame and stigma to understanding and healing. A wholly unexpected, illuminating, and unforgettable book. Brigid Schulte, author of *Overwhelmed: Work, Love and Play When No One Has the Time* "The greatest strength of his book is that it meets [people who call themselves "a little OCD"] on their level: "Imagine you can never turn it off." Adam's personal insights, and case studies from the famous (Winston Churchill, Nikola Tesla) to the obscure (an Ethiopian schoolgirl who ate a wall of mud bricks), make that feat of imagination both possible and painful. Mother Jones "An engrossing first-person study of obsessive-compulsive disorder from within and without . . . Well-researched, witty, honest and irreverent, Adam's account proves as irresistible as his subject. Kirkus (starred review) "Riveting, at times disturbing, but always enlightening . . . For all the impressive marshaling of information, it is Adam's own story of his struggles with the condition . . . that is the most captivating aspect of this impressive work. Adam clearly shows both the devastating impact our thoughts can have when they turn against us, and

how science is helping us fight back

Booklist (starred review) "In a wide-reaching discussion that spans the spectrum of obsession, Nature editor David Adam strikes an impressive balance between humor and poignancy, and between entertaining and informing. Adam seamlessly moves between personal stories of his own struggles with OCD and case studies of other people with the disorder . . . while his smooth prose ensures an enjoyable read.

Publishers Weekly "[A] fascinating study of the living nightmare that is obsessive compulsive disorder . . . [David Adam] has written one of the best and most readable studies of a mental illness to have emerged in recent years . . . [The Man Who Couldn't Stop is] a wide-ranging exploration of the illness, looking at possible causes and cures. It takes in traditional psychiatry, . . . evolutionary psychology, genetics, aversion therapy, philosophy, social history, religion, neuroscience, anthropology and even zoology . . . An honest and open and, yes, maybe life-changing work.

Matt Haig, The Observer (London) "Adam, an award-winning science writer and editor at the journal Nature, is uniquely placed to examine the genetic, evolutionary, psychological, medical and 'just plain unfortunate' possible causes of OCD. He does so with vigour, sharp analysis, compassion and occasional humor . . . A clear-sighted and eminently accessible account . . . The Man Who Couldn't Stop is a fundamentally important book.

Helen Davis, The Sunday Times (London) "[An] engaging, exhaustively researched neuro memoir, a blend of brain science and personal history.

Melanie McGrath, Evening Standard "A captivating first-person account of how a blizzard of unwanted thoughts can become a personal nightmare. At times shocking, at times tragic, at times unbelievably funny, it is a wonderful read.

James Lloyd, BBC Focus "This blew me away. Stunning.

Ian Sample, The Guardian

Dr. David Adam is a writer and editor at Nature, the world's leading scientific journal. Before that he was a specialist correspondent for The Guardian for several years, writing on science, medicine, and the environment. He has been named feature writer of the year by the Association of British Science Writers, and has reported from Antarctica, the Arctic, China, and the depths of the jungle.

David Adam explores the world of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, weaving the book in and out through his own struggles with OCD and with case history and scientific information. It's a good intro to the field, but a lot of times is frustrating because he will relate the beginning of a case history, but not tell the end of the story. For instance, he relates the tale of a woman who underwent a voluntary partial lobotomy, but then says she no longer talks about her procedure, and it is no longer

performed. Why? What happened to her? It would have been nice if he would have contacted some of the individuals mentioned and relayed the full details of their stories-- a lot of what he relates seems to be from a literature review or from hearing people talk at conferences. I finished the book feeling vaguely unsatisfied-- I wanted more information and this book barely grazed the surface.

As someone who suffers from OCD, this book was very therapeutic to read. Some of the psychology needs clarifying a bit, but the author is not, nor does he claim to be, an expert on psychopathology. I have to admit, there were moments during this book when I teared up, because it brought me peace to hear someone else suffer as I have and continue to. Not that misery loves company; it does, but it meant more to me to know I wasn't alone.

It's a good book if you're interested in the topic, and don't know much about it. If like me, you have OCD, then you probably won't learn much.

Excellent blend of memoir and scientific exploration of OCD. On the scientific side, illuminating and concise overview of the history of the mental illness, the daily realities it can impose, and background on the horrifying early treatments and the evolving medical treatments now available (therapy, drugs, and therapy). On the personal side, the author is candid and explicit in his discussion of his own struggle with the illness.

David Adam's book on OCD deserves to be considered one of the best overviews on the subject. He weaves in his personal agonies of having OCD in with psychological, neurological and historical aspects of this disorder. The book is paced well and doesn't bog down except with one exception when he goes on for too long critiquing the official book of psychiatric disorders. It is not that the points he makes are not valid or that they do not apply to OCD, it just could have been shortened. When he stays focused on the nuances of OCD, he is very effective. The book praises the effectiveness of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) in treating OCD. CBT has been a proven breakthrough in treating anxiety related disorders and overcomes Freudian talk therapy which leads nowhere. My personal reaction to his discussion of CBT as it applies to OCD is that he overemphasizes the behavioral part of the therapy at the expense of the cognitive. The behavioral part was most effective for his problems and that is the reason he did so I am sure. It is my view that the cognitive training and insights are equally if not more effective than behavioral aspects. The issues I have with this book do not preclude me from recommending it to anyone who either has

OCD, knows someone who does or wants to learn about it. David Adam wisely points out that there are a lot of silly things said about OCD in movies and in popular culture in general which trivialize it. This book points out that OCD is a mental health condition which ruins people's lives. It is not silly, funny or amusing, it is horrendous.

thought provoking and edifying. The author's candor was impressive and gives the reader a good look at the insides of an obsessive-compulsive's head. Recommended especially for professionals.

David Adam's own very personal struggle--as well as the many vignettes from famous and infamous obsessive-compulsives--create a fascinating story line that connects and illustrates the psychological, biological, and historical information he shares. Treatment, including Sertraline, has made the past 8 years easier for me than the preceding 56 (but not normal, whatever that is). "The Man Who Couldn't Stop" has made me feel less isolated.

Great read for anyone who suffers from OCD or has a loved one that does. It's a personal journey by the author, and I believe that David Adam's book can help many people. I actually exchanged emails with David prior to purchasing his book - he is a very caring individual, and I will never forget his kindness.

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