

Book Title: Detour: My Bipolar Road Trip in 4-D

Author: Lizzie Simon

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Book Review by Stan Ragnes

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Simon was first diagnosed with bipolar disorder as a teenager. However, it wasn't until her college years that her experiences became quite difficult to manage. Her abilities gave her chances to become quite successful as a theater producer in New York City. However, she longed to be better able to manage her life. To this end, Ms. Simon goes on a road trip to find people with this disorder and, in her words, "find a herd of her own." Beginning from New York City, she travels the eastern seaboard states interviewing bipolar people. Her travels then take her to Florida and on to Texas and California until she comes to the realization that what she is really seeking is family. She meets many bipolar people along the way who have very interesting stories--some are sad, some are exciting, and some are uplifting.

I liked this book because it gave me a window into what it is like to live with bipolar manic and depressive conditions. Lizzie Simon provides a look at what her life was like as a young adult and how she coped with it on a day-to-basis. In my experience with bipolar adolescent students, they have a tremendously difficult time making decisions and accepting consequences when the manic phase escalates. Simon's memoir indicated that she was able to do so, for the most part.

Personally, I am thankful to Ms. Simon for giving us non-bipolar folks a glimpse at the questions and answers she faces as a bipolar person. These questions and answers are, in my opinion, the most significant contribution the book makes to people with this disorder, as well as to the families who have family members struggling with this disorder.