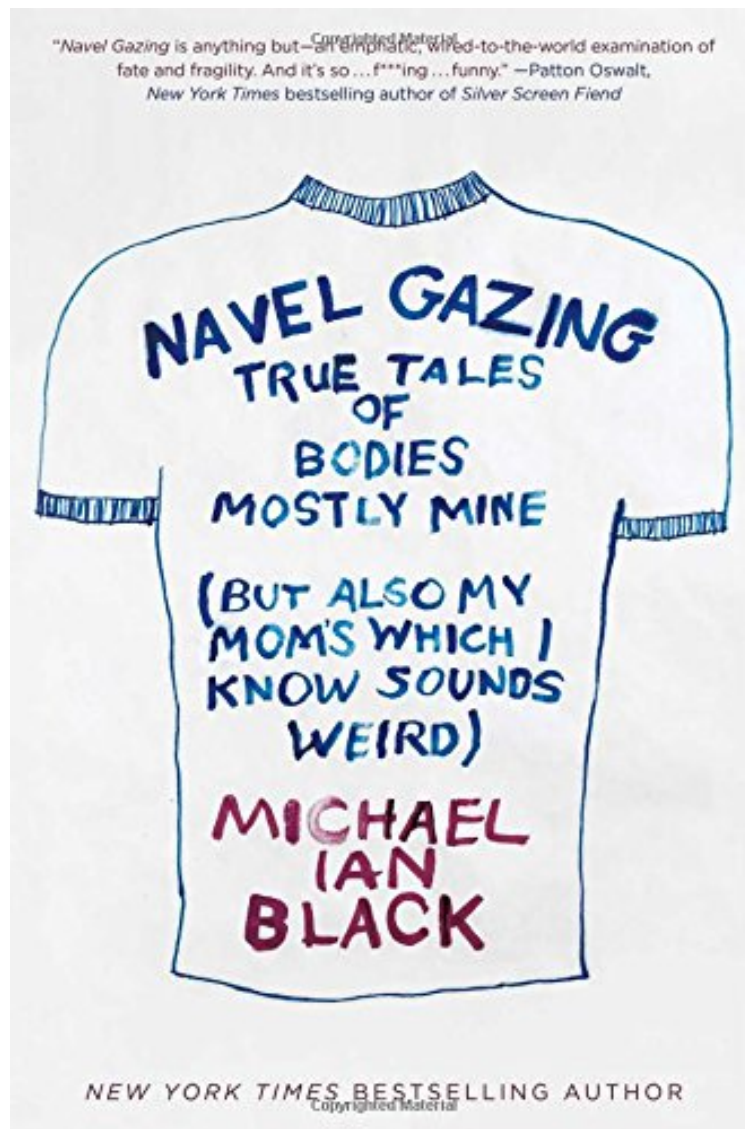


[Download pdf ebook] Navel Gazing: True Tales of Bodies, Mostly Mine (but also my mom's, which I know sounds weird)

Navel Gazing: True Tales of Bodies, Mostly Mine (but also my mom's, which I know sounds weird)

Michael Ian Black

*Download PDF | ePub | DOC | audiobook | ebooks



Download

Read Online

#383870 in Books 2016-01-05 2016-01-05 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.00 x .80 x 6.00l, .0 #File Name: 1476748829208 pages | File size: 16.Mb

Michael Ian Black : Navel Gazing: True Tales of Bodies, Mostly Mine (but also my mom's, which I know sounds weird) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Navel Gazing: True Tales of Bodies, Mostly Mine (but also my mom's, which I know sounds weird):

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Fast, funny read!By Renee BechtelMichael Ian Black is one of my

favorite authors. The only problem with his collection of books is there are not enough of them. "Navel Gazing" is as sharp, funny, and philosophical as his previous memoir "You're Not Doing it Right," and I was just as delighted with the brutally honest content. Black is painfully aware of his own shortcomings, and the chapter about his feet had me laughing and feeling a sense of relief that my own calloused toes weren't as wretched in comparison. Each chapter is indicative of how effortlessly he can take a mundane or depressing situation (dysfunctional family, spiritual bankruptcy, cancer) and spin it into a very funny and relatable offbeat tale. Black comes across as a self deprecating, broody, complex man with a generous and childlike heart - a confusing but endearing combination. You'll want to hug him, your family, and maybe even yourself. Aging sucks. But with it comes enlightenment, wisdom, and humorous self examination. Black delivers it all. 9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. A triumph! If you love to laugh, you NEED to get this book!!! 5 stars out of 5! By NostalgiaVHSBoy did I love this book! It was funny and touching in all the right places. I found myself laughing out loud on almost every page! Michael Ian Black has done it again! His often-times silly and every-time witty reflections on life are addictive. I read the whole book in only a few days! Literally couldn't put it down. Michael Ian Black has been one of my favorite comedians for years; now he's one of my favorite authors. You may know Michael Ian Black from movies such as Wet Hot American Summer, The Baxter, They Came Together, and Wanderlust. In addition, he has been in many great TV shows including The State, Stella and all those amazingly funny 'I love the...' shows on VH1 (my personal favorite was I love 1983 Strikes Back). On a personal level I have been a fan of his since I first fell in love with his dry and acerbic commentary on chicken nuggets. Michael Ian Black's intoxicating yet extremely neurotic personality shines through the pages. You feel as though he's whispering in your ear as you read. He has masterfully transitioned his finely honed comedy skills into a writer's voice anyone can read and relate to. My personal favorite tale covered in the book had to do with a punk band Michael Ian Black started in high school. As someone with many, many regrets throughout my own life I really connected to his self-reflection during this section of the book (and every other section as well). I found that chapter VERY funny and therapeutic in a way. Overall, this is an outstanding book comedy fans of all ages will read and enjoy. Hopefully it will go down as one of the all-time classics of humor literature. For now it will be regarded as another triumph for Michael Ian Black, now undisputedly one of the greatest comedic minds of our generation. 5 stars. 7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. to be a GOOD person. Furthermore By SChesser Michael Ian Black has already proven he can write. But in Navel Gazing he proves he can write about his mother's chronic health problems, and turn them into an interesting, relatable and humorous book. In Navel Gazing, Michael reflects on his mortality, the meaning of life, aging, the pronunciation of his dog's unusual name, and the belief that it's only vanity when other people freak out about losing their hair. For him it's a valid crisis. His writing is always candid, perceptive and humorously self-deprecating. Despite his efforts to make us think otherwise, Michael Ian Black proves himself, once again, to be a GOOD person. Furthermore, even with all his not-having-life-figured-out, he seems to know quite a bit.

New York Times bestselling author and stand-up comedian Michael Ian Black (author of *A Child's First Book of Trump*) delivers a "memorable and funny" (Kirkus Reviews) memoir about confronting his genetic legacy as he hits his forties. Whether it's family history, religion, aging, or his parents, Michael Ian Black always has something to say in the dry, irreverent voice that has captured a fan base of millions. When a medical diagnosis forces him to realize he's not getting any younger, he reexamines his life as a middle-aged guy—of course, in the deadpan wit and self-deprecating vignettes that have become trademarks of his humor. The alt-comedy take on getting older, *Navel Gazing* is a funny-because-it's-true memoir about looking around when you're forty and realizing that life is about more than receding hairlines and proving one's manliness on Twitter—it's about laughing at yourself.

"Set him on the recommended shelf beside Sedaris and Fey." (Booklist) "It's funny and sad and ridiculous and searching and humane and the gravitas sneaks up on you, and the last page had me in tears." (Elizabeth Gilbert, NYT bestselling author of *Eat Pray Love*) "Solid, sensitive, and often appropriately silly... Unlike many other books by comedians, this memoir never feels like a series of onstage routines transcribed to make a buck. Black's examination of the many meanings of being a middle-aged father, husband, and son is an insightful and eminently readable story." (Publishers Weekly) "NAVEL GAZING is anything but -- an emphatic, wired-to-the-world examination of fate and fragility. And it's so...fucking...funny." (Patton Oswalt) "Michael Ian Black asked me if I would provide a quote for his book and I said that I would." (Ricky Gervais) "I don't know what's more gut wrenching - the tales of his mom's illness or the time he tried to start a punk band. This book is so touching, well-written, dare I say profound? Okay how about totally life affirming? These pages are so beautiful they don't deserve to also be fall down funny. Michael Ian Black is showing off. This book made me giggle wildly, then shook me with the reminder of mine and everyone's impending death, brought comfort, and then more giggles. And then in honor of Michael, I took a nap." (Jen Kirkman, author of *I CAN BARELY TAKE CARE OF MYSELF*) "Black sustains a light touch throughout, projecting a warmth that extends from his relationship with his mother through his family life with wife and children." (Kirkus) "All these years, Michael Ian Black has not gotten enough credit for what a good writer he is. This book is charming and good

company and—best of all—amazingly honest. And really, really funny, of course—though you probably already guessed at that part.” — Ira Glass, *This American Life* "Memorable and funny. . . . An amusing look at masculine insecurity and confusion." —Kirkus s "This book is so frank, so full of amusingly embarrassing confessions, I should probably be giving Michael Black a hug instead of a blurb." —Sarah Vowell, *New York Times* bestselling author and essayist "It's no surprise that Michael Ian Black's book is hysterical. But I was surprised by how heartfelt and touching his memoir is. It's true: Michael Ian Black has emotions!" —A.J. Jacobs, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Year of Living Biblically* and *The Know-It-All* "I loved My Custom Van. But I loved You're Not Doing It Right even more. Reading this book felt like taking a long road trip with Michael himself—which I've done. And I actually recommend the book more. Touching, hilarious, and truthful all at once. What else do you want, America?" —Mike Birbiglia, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Sleepwalk with Me* "Dear Michael Ian Black: please stop writing things in books that I wish I had written myself, it's starting to make me feel bad. Also, would you like to be friends someday? I sure would." —Samantha Bee, senior correspondent on *The Daily Show* and author of *I Know I Am But What Are You?* "Michael Ian Black is one of the finest comedy minds of our generation and a master at assembling words in a hilariously pleasing way. You would have to be a vapid crapsack not to enjoy this book." —Chris Hardwick (Praise for Michael Ian Black)

About the Author Michael Ian Black is a writer, comedian, and actor who currently appears on *Another Period*, *The Jim Gaffigan Show*, and *Wet Hot American Summer: First Day of Camp*. He created and starred in many television series, including *Michael* and *Michael Have Issues*, *Stella*, and *The State*. He wrote the screenplay for the film *Run, Fatboy, Run* and wrote and directed the film *Wedding Daze*. Michael regularly tours the country as a stand-up comedian and is the bestselling author of the book *My Custom Van (and 50 Other Mind-Blowing Essays That Will Blow Your Mind All Over Your Face)*, the memoir *You're Not Doing It Right*, and the children's books *Chicken Cheeks*, *The Purple Kangaroo*, *A Pig Parade Is a Terrible Idea*, *I'm Bored, Naked!*, and *Cock-a-Doodle-Do-Bop*. Michael lives in Connecticut with his wife and two children.

Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

Navel Gazing Introduction "Oh shit," you may think, "I am going to die" My mother has no belly button. They took it during one of her "major" surgeries. Over the last fifteen years or so, Mom has had so many surgeries, she now divides them into categories to keep them straight in her head. Minor surgeries are the outpatient ones, like when she visits the specialist who refills the deck-of-cards-size pain pump implanted in her side. Major surgeries are those requiring extended hospitalization and recovery, like the several surgeries she has had to cut away evermore inches of dead intestine, or the time they returned her appendix to its home below her abdomen from where they found it floating near her lung as if it were a lost cat. The bellybuttonectomy was part of a major surgery to untangle an intestine that had looped itself through her bowel, a potentially fatal condition. Before the operation, her doctor asked Mom how attached she felt to her navel, explaining that if she felt the need to preserve it, a plastic surgeon could be brought in to tie together a new one for her like a balloon knot. If a doctor ever asks me how attached I am to my own belly button, I will answer "Very!" because although I am not crazy about any of my body parts, I am selfish enough that I would like to keep them all. Mom told the doctor she did not hold her own belly button quite so dear. "Good," he said, since the plastic surgeon would require an additional expense not covered by whichever insurance company had the misfortune to hold my mother's policy. It's hard to argue with an insurance company refusing to pay for a new navel. Even I, a proponent of universal health care and renowned hater of *The Man*, would have a hard time defending the expense of reconstructive belly button surgery. So, with Mom's blessing, they took it. Where her belly button used to be, there is now just skin, like a pothole that's been paved over. How strange to not have a belly button. After all, a belly button is one of those things that define us, not only as humans, but as members of the entire biological class Mammalia. Without a belly button, you could just as easily be fish or fungus. Having it taken seems like a peculiar kind of bodily transgression, as if a burglar broke into your house but only stole your high school ring. Growing up, I don't remember Mom ever having so much as a cold, despite the fact that she struggled with her weight her entire life, never exercised, and spent years smoking Virginia Slims, the feminist cigarette. Then, almost overnight, it all turned to shit. Her health woes began in a teeny vacation cottage she once owned in the Blue Ridge Mountains with her partner, Sandy. They used to spend a month there each summer after Sandy's term as a South Florida preschool director ended. The cottage is where Mom first noticed persistent and heavy bleeding from her lady parts. (As her son, I am incapable of writing anything more specific than "lady parts" when describing my mother's lady parts.) The telephone calls to me and my brother, Eric, were brief and to the point: She had uterine cancer. . . . They'd found it early, Stage 1. . . . Her prognosis was excellent. . . . No, she didn't need us to fly down there. . . . She and Sandy would be returning to Florida for surgery, followed by a course of radiation. . . . We should go about our lives as if nothing were amiss. . . . Updates forthcoming. Cancer is a scary diagnosis, of course, but Mom did not seem worried. Or perhaps she chose to keep the worry from her words so as not to alarm us. And perhaps we let her do this because, even though we are adults, we are also still her children, and children, no matter how old, allow themselves to be gullible with their parents, because being gullible is often easier than being wise. Upon her return to Florida, Mom underwent a radical hysterectomy. The surgery revealed bad news. Her cancer had invaded the uterine wall, escalating her diagnosis from Stage 1 to Stage 3. Cancer diagnoses are divided into four stages, with Stage 4 being terminal. They are further subdivided into letters a through c. Mom's cancer was rediagnosed as Stage 3c, one

squiggly letter away from a death sentence. A few years ago, I wrote a book called *You're Not Doing It Right*, a (very good, please purchase) memoir about romantic relationships and marriage. This book is a follow-up, focusing on time and family and the body—subjects I began thinking about with a certain degree of seriousness around the time Mom first got sick, and deepening after I turned forty. Forty is that moment most of us believe ourselves to be balanced right at the fulcrum of the life-expectancy teeterboard. On one side, we see our parents' generation starting to get old, some of them sick, some already dead. On the other, our children's generation, brimming with a vibrant *joie de vivre* best described as “annoying.” And there you are, balanced between the two for a split second before beginning your inexorable slide toward the land of dashed dreams and broken hips and assisted living facilities and death. Once you hit forty, it is no longer possible to pretend you will remain forever young. In fact, according to the Social Security Administration, a man like me, age forty-three, only can expect to live an additional thirty-eight years. In other words, I am already past my life's midpoint; calling myself middle-aged is, at best, a fudge, at worst a disservice to the entire field of mathematics. Even so, I don't feel like my life is more than halfway over. I feel exactly as I did ten or fifteen years ago. Yet somehow whole decades have elapsed in the time I've spent upgrading my iPhones through their various iterations. Entire species have gone extinct as I drove around the mall looking for better parking spaces. Then one day, I look up and a government agency is informing me I am no longer a zesty young man, but a just-past-middle-aged adult with adult responsibilities and a mortgage and the first signs of erectile dysfunction. This moment eventually happens to all of us, the moment when you first sense that the road you are traveling may, at some point, end. And when that realization hits, it does so in the sudden, jarring manner of a car crash: “Oh, shit!” you may think at the moment of impact. “I'm going to die.” No doubt some people shrug their shoulders at this revelation. Not me. I panicked. My reaction, I suspect, is the more common of the two. In fact, vast swaths of the economy exist precisely to serve as a balm for this midlife hysteria. The sports car industry. The cosmetic surgery industry. The divorce industry, and its attendant trophy wife industry. Youth may be wasted on the young, but billions are wasted on the middle-aged. My panic catalyzed a thorough examination of my place in the universe, starting with my body. For most of my life, I'd thought about my body only in terms of how best to endure its inadequacies. I'd never done a thorough head-to-toe review of my corporeal self. Yes, I'd had physicals, but those only served to provide raw data points. Such-and-such blood pressure, such-and-such cholesterol, such-and-such this, that, and the other thing. All of which could be weighed and sorted and inputted onto spreadsheets to be distributed among interested medical practitioners and members of Obama Death Panels. And when I began this process of thinking about myself from a physical perspective, as opposed to a more mental or creative perspective, I discovered something that sent me into a psychic tailspin, something that made my mother's cancer seem insignificant. What I discovered is this: I was losing my hair. Not a lot. Not enough that other people would necessarily even notice. Certainly not so much that I couldn't disguise it through artful arrangement. But how long before “artful arrangement” metastasized into comb-over, the hair loss equivalent of a Stage 3c diagnosis? I'd managed to go through the first forty years of my life with no discernible hair loss, and now, just as I'm confronting my own mortality, I start to go bald? How about one thing at a time? I don't consider myself a particularly vain man, but that is only because I am lying. The truth is, I am incredibly vain, even though I have very little to be vain about. But I do have a full head of hair. At least I did. Now I have most of a full head of hair, but also an increasingly visible scalp, and a swirly patch at the back of my head, a plain once lush as the Serengeti, but which grows more parched and drought-stricken by the day, and threatens to erode into a full-blown bald spot. Well, not on my watch, hair. Not on my watch. I researched male-pattern baldness. I bought volumizing shampoos. I learned esoteric terms like DHT, a chemical derivative of testosterone that, when imbalanced, miniaturizes the hair follicles. I read up on hair transplants, even going so far as to ask my accountant if I could deduct such a procedure as a business expense. (He said I could, since I am an actor, and actors must have thick, glossy manes, except for Bruce Willis, who can do whatever he wants.) Finally, I made an appointment with a New York hair-restoration specialist, who, to my surprise, turned out to be the single baldest man I have ever seen. He looked like a condom with eyes. My appointment lasted less than ten minutes. He ran a portable microscope over my scalp, beaming images of all my lovely, individual follicles onto a small television monitor. Yes, he could definitely see thinning, but I still had too much hair to qualify for a transplant. Instead, he prescribed finasteride (Propecia) pills and topical minoxidil (Rogaine), both of which I will have to use for as long as I wish to retain my lustrous locks, which is forever. Even after I am dead. Obviously, I'm joking about comparing hair loss to my mom's cancer. Nobody should get too worked up about something as superficial as thinning hair. Except I did. Because hair loss is only superficial when it happens to somebody else. When it happened to me, it felt cataclysmic. That doctor's waiting room was like a funeral home, filled with somber guys in various states of mourning. Some, like me, appeared more or less hirsute. Others, in more advanced stages of grief, wore baseball caps or pushed their remaining hair forward to camouflage their emerging foreheads, or sported full beards to distract from their lack of topside locks. If hair loss is no big deal, what were we all doing there? And why did we refuse to look each other in the eye? I'd visited intensive care units more upbeat than this place. Why? Because everybody is guilty of catastrophizing the trivial, especially when it comes to our bodies. I know this is true, because were it not, we would not have coined the word cankle. The great writer Nora Ephron titled her final essay collection *I Feel Bad About My Neck*, as apt a description of this condition as any there's likely to be. Personally, I

never felt bad about Nora Ephron's neck, but I certainly feel bad about the leukemia that killed her. Apparently, Nora didn't speak much about her cancer, preferring to keep her large sufferings private, her small ones public. It is an impulse I understand well. Funny people do not want pity. They want laughs. And money. (Mostly money.) I hope Nora Ephron at least made peace with her neck before she died. Who wants to go to the grave feeling bad about her neck? Or thighs or stomach? Feet, yes. Feeling bad about one's feet is understandable. I feel bad about my feet. Here are some other things I feel bad about: the almost 1:1 ratio of the diameter of my upper arms to my wrists; the red blob on my chest, which I am told is a harmless blood vessel, but which reads to the untrained eye like a little clown nose; the fact that my mustache grows at a much quicker rate than my beard, so that I have the perpetual look of a thirteen-year-old Mexican boy; the fact that my right shoulder rests higher than my left no matter how many times throughout the day I attempt to rearrange my spine; my height, which is two inches less than optimal; the curvature of my nose, which is approaching Owen Wilson levels of unsightliness; my drooping scrotum, which, by the year, is slowly sinking into the earth like the city of Venice; the mysterious red slashes I discover on my shoulders and back each morning, the result of "sleep scratching," which, after researching, I discover is an actual mental disorder I seem to have, as is my trichotillomania, the compulsive desire to pull out hair—in my case, beard whiskers—resulting in a large bare patch under my right jawline where there should be beard, which does nothing to diminish my thirteen-year-old-Mexican-boy look. I feel bad about my escalating weight and the amount of arm hair I have, as well as my armpit hair, which extends farther down the underside of my arm than I think it ought to, and also the shade of my skin, which is the Crayola color between "pallid" and "jaundiced." This is only a partial list. On the other hand, there are things about which I feel pretty good. My health, to this point, has been excellent, although it is hard to convince myself it will remain so if I continue to eat, as I did last night after everybody had gone to bed: half a bag of Tostitos, a bowl of ice cream, more Tostitos, and three stale almond cookies that tasted fine once I brushed the dog hair off them. Moreover, I am sixteen years into a marriage, a marriage I expect to last at least another six weeks. We have two kids who do not yet hate us. Plus, although I am gaining weight, I am still thinner than almost all of the guys I went to high school with, which is the only metric that matters. Also, since I am often unemployed, I get plenty of healthful sleep. My sexual engine, never a dynamo, continues to putter along at the libidinous equivalent of a Toyota Camry, decent and workmanlike, but not setting any performance records. And then there is my belly button. It is a fine belly button, an innie, chockablock with small kernels of linty debris and dead skin, a veritable cornucopia of buried treasure. Were I ever to lose my navel, I would surely miss it. Mom's updated cancer diagnosis demanded a new, more aggressive treatment. In addition to the standard course of external radiation she'd already agreed to, the doctors now proposed adding internal radiation, a process where a team threads a radioactive cocktail of cesium, iridium, and iodine into the patient through a catheter, using advanced imaging technology to position the pill as near to the cancer as they can get it. Once that is achieved, they run away because the patient is now, literally, radioactive. I'm not exaggerating. Patients undergoing internal radiation therapy are quarantined in a "hot room" for three days while the body absorbs the poisonous fissile material. It's like eating a nuke. During those three days, patients are not allowed visitors, and medical staff provide care from a distance. I asked Mom how she got her food. "They threw it," she said. (I also ask the obvious question, but the answer is no: Despite being inundated with mysterious radioactive material, she acquired no superpowers.) The radiation therapy was painless, but being alone for three days drove my normally voluble mother batty. She passed the time reading, watching TV, and twirling her bra above her head like a lasso. At the end of her quarantine, the medical staff used a Geiger counter to ensure her body was no longer shooting off death beams. Upon checking her torso, they discovered Mom had written florid messages of thanks all over her stomach in Magic Marker. Everybody had a good laugh, and they sent her home. She checked out of the hospital, spirits high. "Great," she thought. "That's the end of it." But her troubles had just begun.