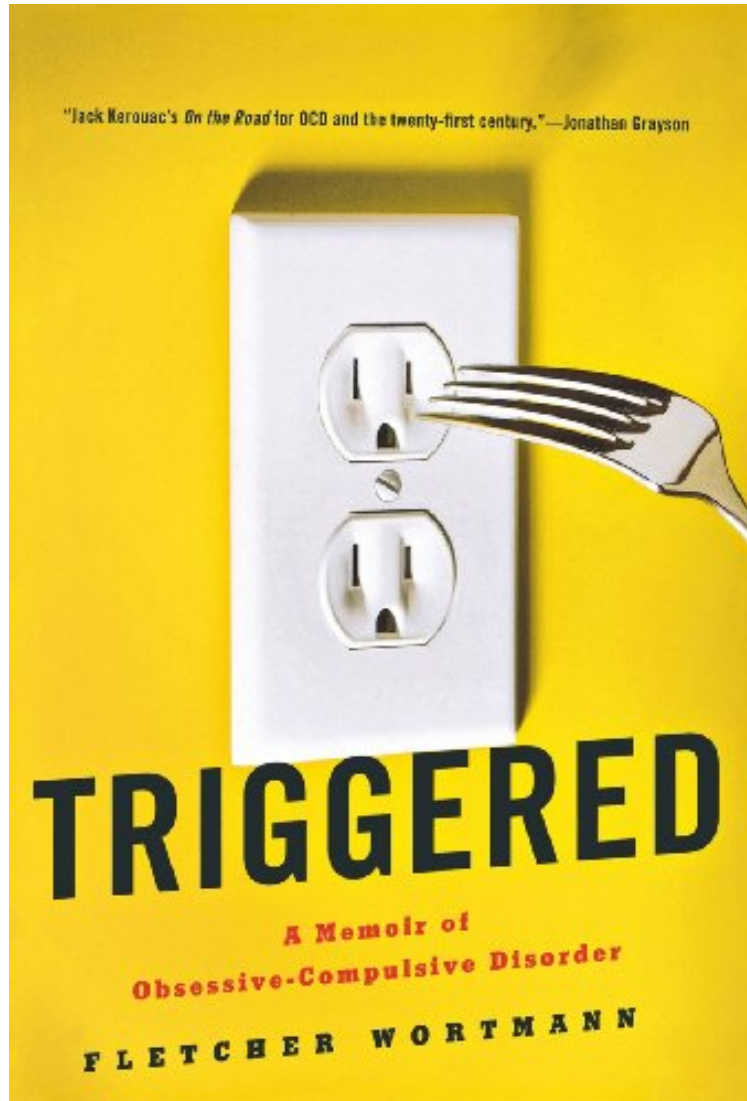


[Library ebook] Triggered: A Memoir of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

# Triggered: A Memoir of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

*Fletcher Wortmann*

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#706320 in Books Fletcher Wortmann 2012-03-27 2012-03-27Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.50 x .3 x 5.50l, .77 #File Name: 0312622104272 pagesTriggered A Memoir of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder | File size: 56.Mb

**Fletcher Wortmann : Triggered: A Memoir of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Triggered: A Memoir of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. FascinatingBy SerenaI think Mr. Wortmann did a terrific job writing this book when you consider his age and his condition. I believe one of his main goals was to make sure people understand that OCD can manifest itself in many ways. If so, he was very successful. There was a tv show titled

OBSESSED (or something like that) several years ago which dealt with the different symptoms of people with OCD and showed them going through cognitive therapy to improve. It was very interesting and I wish it had been on for more than one season. There was a lot of time spent on his teenage years that didn't sound much different from your normal very bright and very sensitive male adolescent's. I didn't understand what to me seemed like hostility toward his first girlfriend. Still, ending that relationship was a very healthy thing to do. I wish the author luck with his writing career and I hope he will continue writing about himself and others. 15 of 16 people found the following review helpful. Wortman's Complaint By Christopher As someone who was diagnosed with OCD just this past year, I can fully relate to the events chronicled in Triggered. I'd almost convinced myself that I was insane when, like Wortman, a simple Google search (of all freakin' things) finally shed some light on what it was that I'd struggled with all my life. Fortunately, the extremity of my sickness wasn't nearly as consuming as what Trigger's author has endured, but I think it's entirely possible that memoirs of this nature are going to eventually go hand-in-hand with treatment of OCD in the not too distant future. Even though Wortman expresses the cathartic nature of having written the book, I'm not sure if even he is fully aware of how powerful of a healing tool it will likely be for many, many people. It's pioneering in its honesty, and I don't know of any other book that so accurately details the horror associated with the intrusive thoughts that often characterize the disorder in question. Heck, even if you don't suffer from OCD there is plenty to admire here: I mean, what's more resonant than the trials and tribulations of an awkward teen/twenty-something trying to find his place in the world? We've all been there, and, like Wortman, can reflect on the scenarios that defined our post-high school lives with at least a little humor. But I digress. If you're looking for a candid glimpse into what it's like to be forged in the ever-present fires of OCD, Triggered is your book. It's simultaneously gut wrenching, hilarious, and poignant. 6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Excellent Insight into OCDBy Patricia This is an unusual book. These kinds of memoirs are not usually written by men so it is an interesting view point. And he is an angry young man, particularly in the first part of the book, but if you stick with it he mellows and gives really good insights. Fortunately his family was wonderful throughout the whole ordeal (even though they did not know what was wrong) so at least he had that important thing going for him when everything else seemed stacked against him. And, I think, that points to biology rather than nurture as the cause of his mental illness. He writes beautifully with a superb vocabulary and his language is graphic but not inappropriately so considering the circumstances. What was most interesting is that his form of OCD is not the way we usually think of that that disease - excessive hand washing, etc. Of course he is scrupulously neat and organized (as he points out OCD is a pathological intolerance of risk however minute) but his agony is caused by unrelenting invasive terrible thoughts - graphic, violent and often sexual. The inability to control this is soul destroying. He walks us through his adolescent and college years which were literally a nightmare. Finally a weak effort at suicide prompts hospitalization and ultimately diagnosis and then long term treatment. His insights are really quite profound, particularly when you consider how young he is (early twenties right now). I can highly recommend the book to anyone interested in OCD, mental illness, depression, anxiety, etc. He has a lot to teach us.

\*\*\*AS FEATURED ON NPR'S TALK OF THE NATION\*\*\* Imagine the worst thing in the world. Picture it. Construct it, carefully and deliberately in your mind. Be careful not to omit anything. Imagine it happening to you, to the people you love. Imagine the worst thing in the world. Now try not to think about it. This is what it is like for Fletcher Wortmann. In his brilliant memoir, the author takes us on an intimate journey across the psychological landscape of OCD, known as the "doubting disorder," as populated by God, girls, and apocalyptic nightmares. Wortmann unflinchingly reveals the elaborate series of psychological rituals he constructs as "preventative measures" to ward off the end times, as well as his learning to cope with intrusive thoughts through Clockwork Orange-like "trigger" therapy. But even more than this, the author emerges as a preternatural talent as he unfolds a kaleidoscope of culture high and low ranging from his obsessions with David Bowie, X-Men, and Pokemon, to an eclectic education shaped by Shakespeare, Kierkegaard, Catholic mysticism, Christian comic books, and the collegiate dating scene at the "People's Republic of Swarthmore." Triggered is a pitch-perfect memoir; a touching, triumphantly funny, compulsively readable, and ultimately uplifting coming-of-age tale for Generation Anxiety. Fletcher Wortmann on OCD and sex: "If a girl accepts an invitation to help count the tiles on your bedroom ceiling, then she will probably be disappointed when she realizes you were speaking literally." ...on OCD and religion: "I have found Catholicism and obsessive compulsive disorder to be deeply sympathetic to one another. One is a repressive construct founded in existential terror, barely restrained by complex, arbitrary ritual behaviors; the other is an anxiety disorder." ...on OCD humor: "By the sink, I noticed a perfunctory sign warning readers to wash their hands. It was scrawled with graffiti: NO YOU CAN'T GERMS ARE UNPREVENTABLE AND INESCAPABLE." ...on the seductiveness of OCD: "Every so often, everything will work, and you will somehow convince yourself that you are safe, and the disorder will claim credit. I had struck a bargain with the OCD. The transaction was complete. In that moment I became subservient to it."

"Consider...at any moment, the end of the world could occur...[Now] prove, with absolute certainty, that this is not true.' In his grimly funny memoir, Wortmann, an actor and comedy writer, describes the heart-thumping panic that

came with his obsessive-compulsive disorder. Only adherence to certain elaborate rituals, he believed, could ward off annihilation. Triggered is key reading for sufferers of this debilitating condition -and for those who want to understand them.” ?People magazine (3 1/2 out of 4 stars)“Wortmann writes eloquently about his battles with OCD, constructing dense, dramatic prose to convey even the tiniest observations... his inspiring victories after successful treatment ring true.” ?Kirkus s“This touching and often quite funny memoir chronicles a young life perennially on the verge of emotional or physical collapse. OCD, Wortmann notes, demands things that the world is unable to give, safety and certainty. He writes about his childhood, the social paralysis that plagued him through his high-school and college years, self-loathing and suicidal impulses, and the time spent at McLean Hospital outside of Boston, the famous psychiatric institution that has treated musician James Taylor and mathematician John Nash, among others. He comments about his "Vicious-and-Spungen-level unhealthy" relationships (as in the Sex Pistols' Sid Vicious and his out-of-control girlfriend Nancy Spungen) and the strange symbiotic relationship that he finds between his disorder and Catholicism. Though meant to help anyone who suffers from mental illness, Wortman's chronicle is also intended for the rest of us, as it sheds illuminating light on an often misunderstood and quite mysterious condition.” ?Booklist (starred review)“At times horrifying, at times terribly funny...Bravo!” ?Janine Latus, New York Times bestselling author of If I Am Missing or Dead“Fletcher Wortmann's memoir, Trigger, is an acid bath of self-revelation and recognition--incisive, sardonic, brutally honest. His defective "better angel" delivers the interior landscape of OCD with rare crystal clarity.” ?Gregory Frost, Director of Fiction Writing Workshop, Swarthmore College, and author of Shadowbridge“Jack Kerouac's On the Road for OCD and the 21st century.” ?Jonathan Grayson, PhD., author of Freedom from Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder“Triggered: A Memoir of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder is for anyone who is or knows someone who is suffering from mental illness of any type. It is well-written by a man who could be writing fiction and mak[es] you laugh or cry depending on the moment.” ?Psych Central“This is a fascinating memoir about mental illness. It is neither maudlin nor whinny, but it portrays a life lived under the weight of a serious disease. What surprised me most about the book was the light tone the author chose to tell his story.” ?NetGalley“While the events he describes are universal (high school hell, the first kiss, first love, the crippling workload of Swarthmore academics), the complications arising from his disorder are unique, and portrayed with quirky honesty throughout his memoir.” ?Swarthmore PhoenixAbout the AuthorFLETCHER WORTMANN was born and raised in Winchester, MA. He graduated from high school in 2005, and in 2007, Fletcher was diagnosed with crippling obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). After receiving treatment at McLean Hospital in Belmont, MA, he went on to receive his Bachelor's degree in English Literature from Swarthmore College in 2009; he wrote his senior thesis on the evolution of the superhero in American culture. Fletcher has been variously employed as a college Writing Instructor, "Party Associate," SAT Tutor, record store clerk, and farm-stand hand. He lives and writes in Boston, MA.Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.1Some Say the World Will End in Ice And when the smoke cleared away, and I sought to look upon the earth, I beheld against the background of cold, humorous stars only the dying sun and the pale mournful planets searching for their sister.—H. P. Lovecraft and Winifred V. Jackson, “The Crawling Chaos”Unless you or someone close to you has been affected by obsessive-compulsive disorder, or you have taken a course in clinical psychology (I take great satisfaction in the fact that my school’s psychology department no longer considers me “abnormal”), you probably know only the basics of OCD: superb personal hygiene, exceptional organizational skills, an inclination toward solving mysteries. For many, a number of alleged professionals in mental health issues among them, any understanding of the disorder ends here. Before I proceed I want to give a short explanation of OCD.I regret to inform you that we have reached the “interactive” portion of the text. I’m going to propose a thought experiment. If it isn’t too much trouble, I need you to look up. Do it. Now. No one’s watching. Look around you. Study your surroundings. Now consider the possibility that, at any moment, the end of the world could occur. The ground cracks, the clouds spark with red lightning, hungry waters rise. The sky hums with annihilating angels. Feel free to incorporate details from your preferred apocalypse, as long as they fit the overall scenario. Imagine the final crisis of man. Let us pretend that the sky is falling.Now I would like you to prove, with absolute certainty, that this is not true and that you are not about to be owned by God. Never mind if you are inside, or even in some kind of reinforced bunker, because for the purposes of argument the hypothetical bullet the universe has aimed at you will pierce any barrier. No rational force can protect you. You have literally moments to live, and you are wasting them reading a memoir.Now, no one is saying that the world is definitely about to end. You could probably construct a strong argument that my impending doomsday is actually pretty unlikely. You could cite research studies, endless statistics, and I’m sure all of these would be very accurate and science-y. But you have to recognize that all of this goes only so far. You can present your evidence to me and I can ask, “How do you know that’s right?” and then you can show me your citations and your annotated bibliography, but I can ask, “How do you know that’s right?” I can ask this again and again, as many times as I need to. A 5 percent margin of error is all well and good but will be small comfort if you are the unlucky one in twenty around when shit gets real.The truth is that you cannot prove anything one way or the other. Everything is possible. We live in a world not of certainty but of endless incalculable risk. The music of the spheres is chaos.Now, before you panic, I’m going to suggest a possible resolution to this situation: The end of days will not occur until you close the covers of this book. You can postpone the apocalypse for as long as you

like just by keeping the book open. The instant you shut it, however, everything will be destroyed. Again, I can't prove to you that this is the case, but considering that we aren't sure about the end of the world to begin with, I don't think this is unreasonable. I know it will be inconvenient to keep the book open, and I am sympathetic, but it's such a minor inconvenience considering what is at risk. Just keep it open, at least for a few more minutes. Then, when you get a chance, you can put it facedown on your desk and forget about it. Or you could nail it open to a plank of wood and hide it in the attic or something. It'll ruin the spine, sure, but that's a pretty minor sacrifice, considering you now hold in your hands the trigger to the extinction of all worlds. But you tell me, "So what?" And you forget about the possibility of imminent destruction, and you go on with your day. May I congratulate you on your apparent sanity. I can continue the narrative, secure that your brain is functioning as advertised. But imagine that "so what" was not good enough. Imagine that you could not live happily without absolute certainty, and that it seemed reasonable for you to keep the book open as long as you could. In this case, certain additional preventative measures would be prudent. Fortunately I just thought of some additional preventative measures. They won't make or break the deal, of course, but they'll help. Maybe. They shouldn't hurt, anyway. Listen: When you hit page one hundred, make sure you lick your finger before you turn the page. Actually, you'd better do that every ten pages. And when you do put the book down, make sure you shut the lights off before you leave the room—although it would probably be better if you flicked them twice first. Also, next time you're out, make sure to write down the remaining time on any parking meters you see. And you know what? I'm going to need you to count things. Like, red shoes or milk or something. Seriously, it doesn't really matter what. Just start counting shit. Like maybe you see three cars go by, just fucking one two three, like that. Just to be safe. Trust me, it'll help, maybe. Of course none of these behaviors will definitely prevent the apocalypse, but they might protect you, and in these dire circumstances we need to do everything we can. These are inconveniences, but aren't they preferable to the end of the world? No. Not really, unfortunately. It is possible for a human being to reach a point where incineration in divine fire would actually increase cognitive and behavioral functionality. It does not end here. It cannot. Tell me: How do you know that you won't be killed by a falling meteor? How do you know that you shut off the toaster oven this morning? That one of the seething millions of bacteria on your hands will not kill you? That your friends don't all secretly hate you? Do you have religion? Do you have the right religion? Are you sure? Are you a pedophile, a necrophiliac, a rapist? A murderer? How can you know that these tendencies do not dwell latent inside you, waiting for the right moment to evince themselves in the most horrific manner possible? How do you know that you are not a monster? How do you know that it isn't the end of the world? Everyone has moments when, against probability and common sense, we attempt to eradicate ordinary uncertainty using our minds. You get halfway around the block and then realize that you might have forgotten to lock the front door, so you drive back around to check it. It's near the end of the seventh inning and things aren't looking good, so you pull out your favorite baseball cap because sometimes it seems to help. You call your child's phone twice to make sure that she got to the party okay. You cross your fingers, you knock on wood, you wish on a coin or a star or a stray eyelash. Everyone does this. It's not a problem for most people. OCD is called "the doubting disorder," at least among people inclined to give cutesy alliterative nicknames to mental illness. OCD is the pathological intolerance of risk, however minute, and the surrender to protective ritual, however unbearable. No matter how unlikely a feared consequence, if there exists even the fraction of a percent of a possibility that it could occur, the disorder is able to find purchase. It seeks out the cracks in our perception of reality, it finds the tiny darkened territories on our internal maps; and then ceaselessly, tirelessly, it sets about expanding them. These cartographic elaborations are careful and clever. You will not notice that anything has been changed until the ink starts to bleed through onto your hands, and then suddenly every inch of territory has been marked inaccessible. Everything is made unknown and unsafe. Here there be dragons. OCD presents itself as an innocuous problem-solving mechanism. If you have a problem, after all, you should try to find an answer. If there is danger, you should protect yourself. So when you are confronted with the possibility of an undesirable occurrence, the disorder suggests modes of defense. Its voice is like that of a beloved grandmother, recently passed away and resurrected by evil ritual. It is maternal, condescending, and affectionate, with a slight suggestion of righteous indignation. "I know what's best for you, dear," it says, a hint of formaldehyde on its breath, a tiny fly crawling on its unblinking painted eye. You listen, compelled by guilt and fear, despite the suspicion that this cannot end well. The disorder promises what it does not have the power to give. As you accept its reasoning, as you begin to work with it, it tightens its hold on you. It exaggerates danger and then offers a modicum of relief through an ever-expanding web of regulation and restriction. OCD insinuates itself delicately until you are utterly constrained, until every moment of existence is a choice between submission to the rule of an absurd tyrant and absolute terror. Eventually the behavior of the sufferer is entirely divorced from reality. Hand washing is no longer a basic hygienic practice but a magic charm, a banishment cast against the immaterial, malevolent threat of "germs." Strange trigonometries are calculated and then arbitrarily discarded at the disorder's whim. The world is perceived through a fine mesh of obsession. Everything is connected; everything shines like a razor with terrible significance. OCD demands safety and certainty, and the fact that nothing can ever really be proven is regrettable but irrelevant to its purposes. It is the anti-life equation, and it will demonstrate to you, if you allow it, that free will is illusory and that

everything wants you de...