

Part I: Mental Illness

The first eight chapters of this book contain *true* stories about *real* people who grew up with a mentally ill parent. In the life of a family or person, mental illness creates mayhem, eliciting varying degrees of disarray, fear, drama, anger, disappointment and hopelessness.

Each chapter stands with its door wide open, revealing the emotional ramifications of living with someone who is mentally and emotionally unstable.

The stories are told with compassion for all involved, showing that the illness, not the person, is responsible for the emotional chaos wreaked upon the life of a family. Every story is set up so that all of you who grew up in similar situations can take your wounds and memories, and relate them to the circumstances on each page from a safe and clear distance.

In this way, you'll have the opportunity to feel a sense of gathering, solidarity and positive transformation.

CHAPTER 1



Beyond Measure

It was late September, about five in the evening. I was outside with some of the neighborhood kids. We were playing ball in the middle of the spotless suburban street where I grew up. Daylight still lingered, thin and pale, in the murky Southern California sky. The long days of summer were slipping into what we considered fall. School had started and I already felt heavy with the weight of trying to fit into a system of learning that was not a good fit for me.

Summer had gone and now my days were scheduled with math, English, geography, gym, and homework.

The sun was beginning to sink and so did my heart when I looked up. My front door was opened and there stood my mom with her perfect hair, in a sheer, apricot-flowered nightgown. She was wobbly. “Laurie, come in the house. *Now!*” she hollered. My first thought was: What did I do?

I was embarrassed beyond expression. My words caught in my throat and I wanted to disappear. My friends were staring, and although this wasn’t anything new, I was frightened like it was the first time and more furious than my