

ADVICE FROM IR APPROVED AUTHOR JOHN FREDERICK ZURN: "USUALLY WHEN I RECEIVE A REJECTION FROM A PUBLISHER THEY ENCOURAGE ME TO KEEP WRITING. THIS IS PROBABLY THE BEST ADVICE I EVER RECEIVED."



Metamorphosis: From Mental Illness to Spiritual Awakening received a 4+ star review, making it an IndieReader Approved title. Following find an interview with author John Frederick Zurn.

The title of my book is, *Metamorphosis: From Mental Illness to Spiritual Awakening*, and it was published October 23, 2022.

What's the book's first line?

The first line of my book states, "My latest volume of poetry Metamorphosis describes my transformation from an individual with a serious mental illness to an earnest seeker of spiritual fulfillment."

What's the book about? Give us the "pitch".

My book describes my inner journey toward God that is both unique in its path, yet universal in its destination. For me, disappointment with life and the inability to discover spiritual truths in the external world left me alienated and depressed. The sudden and intense onset of bipolar disorder became the spark that ignited my search for God within my own internal world. Racing thoughts, delusions, and a serious suicide attempt represented "wrong turns" and "crash landings" that left me hospitalized and alone. The first section of Metamorphosis, "Purgatory", describes this inability to stay safe and get answers to my questions about death. The second section called, "Spiritual Awakening," explains how meditation, medicines, and therapy supported a spiritual evolution that gradually healed my mind and freed my spirit. The final section of this book called, "Society," addresses some of the challenges faced by individuals with a mental illness, in a society that reduces them to stereotypes which, in turn, encourages discrimination. The whole dilemma of mental illness and managing its symptoms is probably more timely today than ever, and my entire volume of poems addresses these issues from a "lived experience" prospective.

What inspired you to write the book? A particular person? An event?

I was encouraged to write my books by my psychiatrist who felt my experiences could be helpful for individuals struggling with a mental illness. But mostly I was inspired by my illness itself that challenged me to discover the source of my bipolar disorder and determine how to manage it.

What's the main reason someone should really read this book?

I feel certain that there exists, at least, three groups of people who could find my book helpful. It could encourage individuals and families who are desperately seeking relief from the symptoms and the ramifications of mental illness. My book could also be useful to mental health professionals such as psychiatrist and therapists. My poems provide some of the internal experiences of bipolar disorder that transcends simple causes and psychological explanations. However, my verse could also be valuable to anyone who wishes to know what mental illness is, how it differs from societal beliefs, and why it is so difficult to overcome.

When did you first decide to become an author?

I first decided to become a writer after my first semester in college while taking a literature class. In high school, English was simply grammar and cliff notes. I was astonished to later discover how wonderful literature was as an art form. I was "hooked" almost immediately, and I never looked back or doubted my desire to write stories and poems.

Is this the first book you've written?

Over a forty year period, I have written a number of self-published and published works including poetry collections, short stories and individual poems. In addition, I've written a few Sci-Fi fantasy novels. My individual works are on my website: www.portalstoinnerdimensions.com.

What do you do for work when you're not writing?

I am now retired, so I write, hike, and garden. Before then I worked in factories, taught school, and worked at two separate sheltered workshops. Now that I have more time to focus on writing and marketing, my books are having more success.

How much time do you generally spend on your writing?

Writing is part of my daily routine. I generally get up early, meditate, and then write for several hours. In the early morning, it is very quiet in my neighborhood and that creates a peaceful environment for me to work. However, I sometimes write later in the day if I feel inspired.

What's the best and the hardest part of being an indie?

Being an indie writer requires dedication, perseverance, and a firm faith in my writing ability. Mostly, I write with no substantive support except from my wife, Donna. This makes submissions to publisher's time consuming and a little depressing. Yet, writing independently gives me the opportunity to create with the knowledge that I have few restraints on my subject matter and themes. It is difficult, however, to search the internet attempting to find a good fit for my work.

What's a great piece of advice that you can share with fellow indie authors?

Usually when I receive a rejection from a publisher they encourage me to keep writing. This is probably the best advice I ever received.

Would you go traditional if a publisher came calling? If so, why?

To be honest, I would seriously consider publishing with a reputable publisher if they were genuinely excited to publish my poems, had a good marketing program, and if I was assured

royalties. Needless to say, I'm not holding my breath. Working on my own might actually be better anyway because I can make most of my own decisions.

Is there something in particular that motivates you (fame? fortune?)

Writing has always been therapeutic for me, and it helps me relieve anxiety and provides closure for difficult memories. Writing also helps redirect delusional impulses toward safer, more productive channels for my creativity. It continues to allow me to learn and grow, so that thoughts and emotions that once led to problematic moods and behavior are now either managed or transcended. Equally important, I've discovered that I actually have a compulsion to write. When I don't write for several days, I feel anxious and off balance. However, it is also true that I get a feeling of accomplishment when I realize that my work has been helpful to readers in their lives.

Which writer, living or dead, do you most admire?

My favorite writer of all is, William Shakespeare, not only because his writing is timeless – his characters are actually psychoanalyzed – but also because Shakespeare writes in rhyme. Rhyming poetry has been largely ignored in the past hundred years. But for me, it's musical and provides a tentative frame that allows for both creative tension and order. Rhyming is the form in which I usually write.

Which book do you wish you could have written?

Of all the books I've read, my favorite is *Journey of Awakening* by Ram Dass. Formally a Harvard professor of psychology, his writing about meditation and philosophy have changed my outlook on life and greatly helped me to understand and practice meditation. His book eventually helped me with my bipolar symptoms and encouraged my spiritual growth.