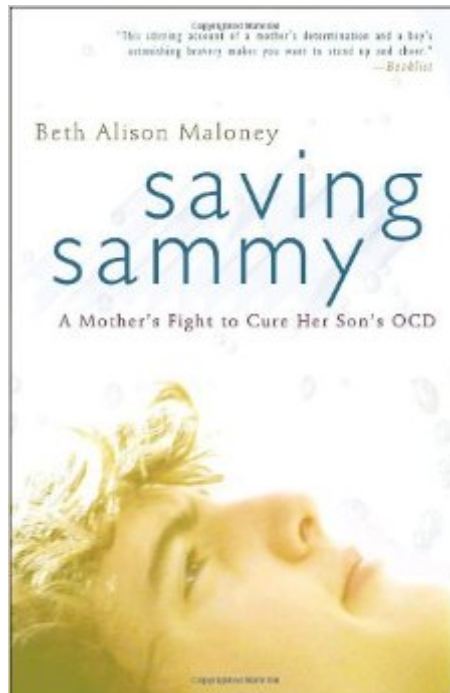


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Saving Sammy: A Mother's Fight To Cure Her Son's OCD



Synopsis

The story of one mother's fight against the medical establishment to prove the link between infection-triggered PANDAS and her son's sudden-onset OCD and Tourette syndrome. The summer before entering sixth grade, Sammy, a bright and charming boy who lived on the coast of Maine, suddenly began to exhibit disturbing behavior. He walked and ate with his eyes shut, refused to bathe, burst into fits of rage, slithered against walls, and used his limbs instead of his hands to touch light switches, doorknobs, and faucets. Sammy's mother, Beth, already coping with the overwhelming responsibility of raising three sons alone, watched helplessly as her middle child descended into madness. Sammy was soon diagnosed with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and later with Tourette syndrome. Unwilling to accept the doctor's prognosis for lifelong mental illness and repeated hospitalizations, Beth fought to uncover what was causing this decline. Beth's quest took her to the center of the medical community's raging debate about whether OCD and Tourette syndrome can be caused by PANDAS (Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal Infections). With the battle lines firmly drawn, Beth searched until she found two cutting-edge doctors who answered that question with a definitive yes. Together, they cured Sammy. Five years later, he remains symptom free.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

What could be more compelling than the story of a mom who simply will not accept that her son's sudden onset OCD/Tourette's Syndrome is irreversible? At the age of twelve years old, Sammy

began developing symptoms of OCD that grew in intensity over a fairly short period of time until they seemed to control all phases of his life. Sammy's mother, and his two brothers, were forced to watch helplessly as he went from being a normal young boy, who liked school, loved playing Dungeons and Dragons and was an acknowledged math wizard, to one who was positively paralyzed by his need to engage in ritualistic and repetitive behaviors that controlled his every movement; who could not touch a door handle or a telephone or virtually anything else; who could not attend to basic matters of hygiene or change his clothes, and who could not eat to the point of becoming emaciated and dehydrated. As Sammy's mom put her entire life on hold to attend to Sammy's condition, and even as Sammy bravely tried to continue going to school and to his math events (it could take him hours to get from the house to the car, and then from the car to his ultimate destination), eventually, Sammy became virtually housebound, and his mother with him. Sammy's mom was told that he had OCD (later he was diagnosed with Tourette's Syndrome as well), a difficult and probably irreversible mental illness which might get worse or might get better and was given various medications to help deal with its effects. Sammy continued to deteriorate, and mom's research into her son's condition seemed to confirm that there was little that could be done for him. She continued to take him to doctors and continued to follow their advice concerning medications, all the while watching her son develop new and more complex compulsions.

I expect this book to draw critics regarding the diagnosis of PANDAS. It's also very easy to criticize the mom if you have never lived through the horror of watching a healthy, intelligent, engaging (I don't dare use the word "normal") child of yours have his or her mind stolen virtually overnight. I walked in this woman's shoes last year. The author does a commendable job of recounting the accumulation of the illness, because there really are no words to adequately convey the experience. It's like being on a water slide into hell. I cried through much of the book. I was fortunate. My 6 year old daughter DID fit the "accepted profile" of a PANDAS patient. We had sharp and open minded doctors who caught it quickly. I had never heard of PANDAS before her diagnosis, so I wasn't "looking for it". Of course, there were multiple tests to rule out other issues such as seizure disorders. After just a few days on amoxicillin she was dramatically improved, and after a couple of months more on antibiotics, she was "back". I was lucky not to watch my child deteriorate for more than a year, as was the author's experience. We also did not spend tens of thousands of dollars on psychiatric visits and medications. Again, because we had a sharp pediatrician and an up-to-date pediatric psychiatrist.

Not a book that would be of interest to everyone, but it is a very well written, accurate account of what it is like to watch your child fall prey to OCD. It's also an excellent portrait of what it's like to be a mother of a child with OCD. I've lived it... and I found myself nodding, crying and saying "Yes!" over and over again while reading this book. Desperate to save your child, with or without the help of others, you will do anything to figure out how to help them and save your family from crumbling around you. That quest is an exhausting, daunting, uncertain one that may lead you to fall into a pit of desperation when exhaustion and frustration overcome you. This book reminds you time and time again (if you are a parent of a child with OCD) that you are not alone in your feelings. I liked that about the book and it made me think I'd like the author if I met her because the thoughts and feelings she shares in the book are 'real'. The author: A strong woman- a good mother - an advocate for her child - an attorney with a bright mind. The author gives hope to parents of children with OCD and through her own struggle illuminates the need for two things. First, the need to question doctors if what they are doing isn't working and second, the importance of being an advocate for looking outside the box when it comes to an answer. If you are the parent or a guardian of a child with OCD... read this book. While what saved Sammy might not 'save' your child, it's certainly a good story and excellent information to keep in mind when looking to manage OCD. My own experience with OCD: My daughter showed signs of OCD following a traumatic incident when she was 5, whereby she went into anaphylactic shock.

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