



## Reasons to Stay Alive

*Matt Haig*

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## Reasons to Stay Alive Matt Haig

**One of *Entertainment Weekly*'s 25 most anticipated books of 2016—Matt Haig's accessible and life-affirming memoir of his struggle with depression, and how his triumph over the illness taught him to live**

Like nearly one in five people, Matt Haig suffers from depression. *Reasons to Stay Alive* is Matt's inspiring account of how, minute by minute and day by day, he overcame the disease with the help of reading, writing, and the love of his parents and his girlfriend (and now-wife), Andrea. And eventually, he learned to appreciate life all the more for it.

Everyone's lives are touched by mental illness: if we do not suffer from it ourselves, then we have a friend or loved one who does. Matt's frankness about his experiences is both inspiring to those who feel daunted by depression and illuminating to those who are mystified by it. Above all, his humor and encouragement never let us lose sight of hope. Speaking as his present self to his former self in the depths of depression, Matt is adamant that the oldest cliché is the truest—there is light at the end of the tunnel. He teaches us to celebrate the small joys and moments of peace that life brings, and reminds us that there are always reasons to stay alive.

## Reasons to Stay Alive Details

Date : Published February 23rd 2016 by Penguin Books (first published March 5th 2015)

ISBN : 9780143128724

Author : Matt Haig

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# From Reader Review Reasons to Stay Alive for online ebook

**The Serendipity Aegis ~ ?Misericordia? ?????? ✨\*♥♥ says**

One of the most beautifully written books I have ever read. Inspiration almost drips off the pages. It's honest and vivid enough to make difference even for people who have done no personal trips to the hellish planet of Depression.

And the imagery! Don't get me started on it or I won't get any sleep today! I love when concepts are mixed with guidelines and wisdom of someone who has been there and done all that.

I can't imagine why I never knew about this author before! It's a sure must read and a must reread and even a must keep copy on my bedside table at all times!

NB! Careful if you have the tendency to trigger negative emotions via empathy as this book is honest about what the author went through regarding his psychological experiences.

Inspirational:

Q:

**Maybe love is just about finding the person you can be your weird self with. (c)**

Q:

So every human inhabitant on this freak wonder of a planet shares the same core. I am you and you are me. We are alone, but not alone. We are trapped by time, but also infinite. Made of flesh, but also stars. (c)

Q:

**How to stop time: kiss.**

**How to travel in time: read.**

**How to escape time: music.**

**How to feel time: write.**

**How to release time: breathe. (c)**

Q:

**Your mind is a galaxy.** More dark than light. But the light makes it worthwhile. ... Even when the darkness is total. Always know that life is not still. Time is space. **You are moving through that galaxy. Wait for the stars. (c)**

Q:

You will one day experience joy that matches this pain. You will cry euphoric tears at the Beach Boys, you will stare down at a baby's face as she lies asleep in your lap, you will make great friends, you will eat delicious foods you haven't tried yet, you will be able to look at a view from a high place and not assess the likelihood of dying from falling. There are books you haven't read yet that will enrich you, films you will watch while eating extra-large buckets of popcorn, and you will dance and laugh and have sex and go for runs by the river and have late-night conversations and laugh until it hurts. **Life is waiting for you. You might be stuck here for a while, but the world isn't going anywhere.** Hang on in there if you can. Life is always worth it. (c)

Instructional:

Q:

The key is in accepting your thoughts, all of them, even the bad ones. Accept thoughts, but don't become them. Understand, for instance, that having a sad thought, even having a continual succession of sad thoughts, is not the same as being a sad person. **You can walk through a storm and feel the wind but you know you are not the wind.**

That is how we must be with our minds. We must allow ourselves to feel their gales and downpours, but all the time knowing this is just necessary weather.

When I sink deep, now, and I still do from time to time, I try and understand that there is another, bigger and stronger part of me that is not sinking. It stands unwavering. (c)

Q:

So, as was often the case, a big fear was beaten by a bigger fear. The best way to beat a monster is to find a scarier one. (c)

Q:

This isn't a question of strength. Not the stoic, get-on-with-stuff-without-thinking-too-much kind of strength, anyway. It's more of a zooming-in. That sharpening. ... You know, before the age of twenty-four I hadn't realised how bad things could feel, but I hadn't realised how good they could feel either. That shell might be protecting you, but it's also stopping you feeling the full force of that good stuff. Depression might be a hell of a price to pay for waking up to life, ... But it is actually quite therapeutic to know that pleasure doesn't just help compensate for pain, it can actually grow out of it. (c)

Q:

**THE WORLD IS increasingly designed to depress us.** Happiness isn't very good for the economy.

**If we were happy with what we had, why would we need more?**

How do you sell an anti-ageing moisturiser? You make someone worry about ageing.

How do you get people to vote for a political party? You make them worry about immigration.

How do you get them to buy insurance? By making them worry about everything.

How do you get them to have plastic surgery? By highlighting their physical flaws.

How do you get them to watch a TV show? By making them worry about missing out.

How do you get them to buy a new smartphone? By making them feel like they are being left behind.

**To be calm becomes a kind of revolutionary act. To be happy with your own non-upgraded existence.**

**To be comfortable with our messy, human selves, would not be good for business.** (c)

Q:

You are walking around with your head on fire and no one can see the flames. (c)

Q:

I'd always considered myself to be a person who liked books. But there is a difference between liking books and needing them. I needed books. They weren't a luxury good during that time in my life. They were a Class A addictive substance. I'd have gladly got into serious debt to read (indeed, I did). I think I read more books in those six months than I had done during five years of university education, and I'd certainly fallen deeper into the worlds conjured on the page.

**There is this idea that you either read to escape or you read to find yourself. I don't really see the difference. We find ourselves through the process of escaping.** (c)

Q:

**MINDS ARE UNIQUE.** They go wrong in unique ways. My mind went wrong in a slightly different way to how other minds go wrong. Our experience overlaps with other people's, but it is never exactly the same experience. (c)

Q:

Once the storm is over you won't remember how you made it through, how you managed to survive. You won't even be sure, in fact, whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm you won't be the same person who walked in. That's what this storm's all about. (c)

Q:

Talk. Listen. Encourage talking. Encourage listening. Keep adding to the conversation. Stay on the lookout for those wanting to join in the conversation. Keep reiterating, again and again, that depression is not something you 'admit to', it is not something you have to blush about, it is a human experience. (c)

Q:

Things people say to depressives that they don't say in other life-threatening situations:

'Come on, I know you've got tuberculosis, but it could be worse. At least no one's died.'

'Why do you think you got cancer of the stomach?'

'Yes, I know, colon cancer is hard, but you want to try living with someone who has got it. Sheesh. Nightmare.'

‘Oh, Alzheimer’s you say? Oh, tell me about it, I get that all the time.’

‘Ah, meningitis. Come on, mind over matter.’

‘Yes, yes, your leg is on fire, but talking about it all the time isn’t going to help things, is it?’

‘Okay. Yes. Yes. Maybe your parachute has failed. But chin up. (c)

Q:

Never say ‘pull yourself together’ or ‘cheer up’ unless you’re also going to provide detailed, foolproof instructions. (c)

Q:

We are all echoes of each other. We are all humans and feel both despair and happiness. Our similarities, as a species, are staggering. And our mental fragility is directly tied up with our humanity. We have nothing to be ashamed of in being human, any more than a tree should be ashamed of having branches. Let’s accept our own nature. Let’s be kind to ourselves and to each other. Let’s never add to the pain by blaming ourselves. We are all so weird that, really, none of us are. There are seven billion versions of strange on this freak wonder of a planet. We are all part of that. All freaks. All wonderful. (c)

Q:

Goals are the source of misery. An unattained goal causes pain, but actually achieving it brings only a brief satisfaction. (c)

Q:

Life is hard. It may be beautiful and wonderful but it is also hard. ... Life is so infinitely hard. It involves a thousand tasks all at once. And I am a thousand different people, all fleeing away from the centre. (c)

Q:

That’s the odd thing about depression and anxiety. It acts like an intense fear of happiness, even as you yourself consciously want that happiness more than anything. So if it catches you smiling, even fake smiling, then - well, that stuff’s just not allowed and you know it, so here comes ten tons of counterbalance. (c)

Q:

The weirdest thing about a mind is that you can have the most intense things going on in there but no one else can see them. The world shrugs. (c)

Q:

Where talk exists, so does hope. (c)

Q:

If you have ever believed a depressive wants to be happy, you are wrong. They could not care less about the luxury of happiness. They just want to feel an absence of pain. To escape a mind on fire, where thoughts blaze and smoke like old possessions lost to arson. To be normal. Or, as normal is impossible, to be empty. And the only way I could be empty was to stop living. One minus one is zero. (c)

Q:

I wanted to be dead. No. That’s not quite right. I didn’t want to be dead, I just didn’t want to be alive. (c)

Q:

What doesn’t kill you very often makes you weaker. What doesn’t kill you can leave you limping for the rest of your days. What doesn’t kill you can make you scared to leave your house, or even your bedroom, and have you trembling, or mumbling incoherently, or leaning with your head on a window pane, wishing you could return to the time before the thing that didn’t kill you. (c)

Q:

Forcing yourself to see the world through love’s gaze can be healthy. Love is an attitude to life. It can save us. (c)

Q:

Unlike a book or a film depression doesn’t have to be about something. ...

Books were about movement. They were about quests and journeys. Beginnings and middles and ends, even if not in that order. They were about new chapters. And leaving old ones behind. (c)

Q:

Misery, like yoga, is not a competitive sport. (c)

On books and emotions:

Q:

People place so much value on thought, but feeling is as essential. I want to read books that make me laugh and cry and fear and hope and punch the air in triumph. I want a book to hug me or grab me by the scruff of my neck. I don't even mind if it punches me in the gut. Because we are here to feel. (c)

Q:

... we are humans. We are a clandestine species. Unlike other animals we wear clothes and do our procreating behind closed doors. And we are ashamed when things go wrong with us. But we'll grow out of this, and the way we'll do it is by speaking about it. And maybe even through reading and writing about it. I believe that. Because it was, in part, through reading and writing that I found a kind of salvation from the dark. (c)

Q:

I CAN REMEMBER the day the old me died.

It started with a thought. (c)

Q:

I had put off being an adult for as long as I could, and it had loomed like a cloud. A cloud that was now breaking and raining down on me. (c)

Q:

... the mind is infinite, and its torments – when they happen – can be equally infinite. (c)

Q:

But this was illness. This wasn't having a crazy thought. This wasn't being a bit wacky. This wasn't reading Borges or listening to Captain Beefheart or smoking a pipe or hallucinating a giant Mars bar. This was pain. (c)

Q:

In a world where possibility is endless, the possibilities for pain and loss and permanent separation are also endless. So fear breeds imagination, and vice versa, on and on and on, until there is nothing left to do except go mad. (c)

Funny!

Q:

The woman I wanted to be was not particularly fast at her job. I think she was the slowest person there had ever been at her job. I think she may well have been the incentive for the later move towards self-service checkouts in many shops. ...

‘Do you need a bag?’

I sort of did need a bag, but I couldn't risk slowing her down any more. (c)

Q:

So, annoyingly, scientists aren't all singing from the same hymn sheet. Some don't even believe there is a hymn sheet. Others have burnt the hymn sheet and written their own songs. (c)

Q:

THE DEMON SAT next to me in the back of the car. He was real and false all at once. ... This is weird. Mum is talking about Matthew Bourne and her friends who have seen this production and there is a happy demon on the back seat licking my face. (c)

How to live

Q:

2. Sip, don't gulp. (c)

Q:

10. Wherever you are, at any moment, try and find something beautiful. A face, a line out of a poem, the

clouds out of a window, some graffiti, a wind farm. **Beauty cleans the mind.** (c)

Q:

14. Look at the sky. Remind yourself of the cosmos. Seek vastness at every opportunity, in order to see the smallness of yourself. (c)

Q:

17. Do not watch TV aimlessly. Do not go on social media aimlessly. Always be aware of what you are doing, and why you are doing it. Don't value TV less. Value it more. Then you will watch it less. Unchecked distractions will lead you to distraction. (c)

Q:

18. Sit down. Lie down. Be still. Do nothing. Observe. Listen to your mind. Let it do what it does without judging it. Let it go, like the Snow Queen... (c)

Q:

22. Live. Love. Let go. The three Ls. (c)

Q:

21. ... walk as if you are kissing the Earth with your feet. (c)

Q:

25. Read a book without thinking about finishing it. Just read it. Enjoy every word, sentence, and paragraph. Don't wish for it to end, or for it to never end. (c)

Q:

24. Beware of the gap. The gap between where you are and where you want to be. Simply thinking of the gap widens it. And you end up falling through. (c)

Q:

30. Jules Verne wrote of the 'Living Infinite'. This is the world of love and emotion that is like a 'sea'. If we can submerge ourselves in it, we find infinity in ourselves, and the space we need to survive. (c)

Q:

31. Three in the morning is never the time to try and sort out your life. (c)

Q:

32. Remember that there is nothing weird about you. You are just a human, and everything you do and feel is a natural thing, because we are natural animals. You are nature. You are a hominid ape. You are in the world and the world is in you. Everything connects. (c)

Q:

39. Just when you feel you have no time to relax, know that this is the moment you most need to make time to relax. (c)

Q:

40. Be brave. Be strong. Breathe, and keep going. You will thank yourself later. (c)

### Things to enjoy!

SUNRISES, SUNSETS, THE thousand suns and worlds that aren't ours but shine in the night sky. Books. Cold beer. Fresh air. Dogs. Horses. Yellowing paperbacks. Skin against skin at one in the morning. Long, deep, meaningful kisses. Short, shallow, polite kisses. (All kisses.) Cold swimming pools. Oceans. Seas. Rivers. Lakes. Fjords. Ponds. Puddles. Roaring fires. Pub meals. Sitting outside and eating olives. The lights fading in the cinema, with a bucket of warm popcorn in your lap. Music. Love. Unabashed emotion. Rock pools. Swimming pools. Peanut butter sandwiches. The scent of pine on a warm evening in Italy. Drinking water after a long run. Getting the all-clear after a health scare. Getting the phone call. ... Cities twinkling at night as you drive past them, as if they are fallen constellations of stars.

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## Thomas says

**"Now, listen. If you have ever believed a depressive wants to be happy, you are wrong. They could not care less about the luxury of happiness. They just want to feel an absence of pain. To escape a mind on fire, where thoughts blaze and smoke like old possessions lost to arson. To be *normal*."**

A meaningful book about depression, anxiety, and creating reasons to stay alive. Like a modern day William Styron, Matt Haig shares his experience with depression and anxiety and how he fought to overcome suicidal thinking. He discloses how his mental illness has affected his work, his relationships, and his perception of life overall. The greatest part: he frames his mental illness not as a weakness or a strength, but just as another part of himself, a facet that provides both pros and cons as all traits do. Another great quote from the same page as the first one in this review:

**"But actually, it wasn't easy. The weird thing about depression is that, even though you might have more suicidal thoughts, the fear of death remains the same. The only difference is that the pain of life has rapidly increased. So when you hear about someone killing themselves it's important to know that death wasn't any less scary for them. It wasn't a 'choice' in the moral sense. To be moralistic about it is to misunderstand."**

I loved the insight Haig shared about depression. His view on resisting medication while seeking treatment resonated with me: of course you would use medication if you have to, but you can also learn to breathe on your own - depending on your condition - without the influence of pharmaceutical companies. I also appreciated his emphasis on mindfulness and breathing. We live in such a fast-paced world that feelings of aloneness and worry about emails, meetings, and deadlines seem natural. Haig encourages us to take a step back and give ourselves time for self-care.

Though I enjoyed *Reasons to Stay Alive*, I wanted more in certain areas. The short length of each chapter made the book easy to get through, but that same brevity prevented more thorough and developed trains of thought/arguments. From a memoir perspective, I also desired more of a consistent narrative, as I felt that the book jumped from idea to idea a lot. Still, I would recommend *Reasons to Stay Alive*, in particular to those interested in mental illness who have not already read too much about it. A final, hopeful quote:

**"I stood there for a while. Summoning the courage to die, and then summoning the courage to live. To be. Not to be. Right there, death was so close. An ounce more terror and the scales would have tipped. There may be a universe in which I took that step but it isn't this one."**

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## Amy | shoutame says

Not too long ago I was approached by Canongate about this book. They had seen that I made a recommendation video on my YouTube channel for books relating to mental health and because of this they thought I would enjoy this book. Mental health awareness is something I consider to be of the utmost importance - having suffered with depression and anxiety from a young age this is definitely a topic I hold dear to my heart.

Now I have to be honest - I'm not one for reading non-fiction, in fact last year I think I only read one biography and possibly a 'making of The Hobbit' book, so this is definitely out of my comfort zone! Because

of this I was very hesitant to accept the novel for review but on hearing some very positive things from people I trust I decided to throw caution to the wind and accept! Wow long intro...now on to my thoughts:

- Where do I begin?! This book was simply wonderful, heart-breaking and a real thought provoker. I don't think I can even efficiently describe this book to get across the beauty and significance of it.

- So this is a biographical novel written by the author Matt Haig; Matt is telling us the story of his descent into depression and anxiety at the age of twenty four. We learn of how Matt contemplated suicide and how he could barely leave the house due to the anxiety, a lot of this resonated with me and I found myself nodding along with various anecdotes from Haig's childhood that I also had very similar experiences of. I think this is a book that will mean a lot of things to a lot of people. Either you can see this in yourself or you can see it in someone you love - I believe this book could be of great help to sufferers and supports alike.

- I think this book will definitely be an eye opener to anyone who sees depression and anxiety as just being 'a little bit sad' or just 'over-worried' - Haig is wonderfully articulate in the way he describes the despair and panic that comes along with these mental illnesses and I commend him on sharing his extremely personal story. Mental health is a difficult topic to discuss, especially when you are in the midst of it - in myself I can see that when I look back now I have a much greater understanding of my state of mind and have learnt how to cope with similar feelings in the future.

- There are so many things I could say about this book, I plan to go back through and underline all of the things I absolutely loved - I read this book on a train journey to London and only had my phone so just took pictures of the quotes that really resonated with me.

- I would highly recommend this book to all, if you are a sufferer or if you know someone who has or is suffering (and I'm willing to bet you do) then this book is for you. Truly eye-opening and something that I think would bring hope to those who are currently feeling lost - I think if I had read something like this during my darkest times I would have really benefitted from the hope that radiates from this story.

- 5 out of 5 stars and a definite reread for the coming months! Straight into my favourites!

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## **Es Summer says**

If you are doubting to read this book, read this quote:

*"The world is increasingly designed to depress us.*

*Happiness isn't very good for the economy. If we were happy with what we had, why would we need more?*

*How do you sell an anti-ageing moisturizer?*

*You make someone worry about ageing.*

*How do you get people to vote for a political party?*

*You make them worry about immigration.*

*How do you get them to buy insurance?*

*By making them worry about everything.*

*How do you get them to have plastic surgery?*

*By highlighting their physical flaws.*

*How do you get them to watch a TV show?*

***By making them worry about missing out. "***

This book is one of the best non-fiction books I have ever read.

How it touched me.

How deeply it made me feel.

This is more than a self-help book or a book that teaches you how to get rid of depression.

This book *makes* you live depression.

It gets so deep under your skin, that sadness starts to pour into your veins, your emotions are heightened.

This author has a way of making you understand not only the sickness, but every aspect of it, as well. I lived his story with him and to be honest, it was not a happy-go-lucky everything-will-be-okay self-help book. It was a straight in your face kinda book.

A story that did not sugar coat anything. It had something strangely comforting, though.

He is so accepting; of his sadness, his anxiety, the intense emotions. He does not hesitate to make you understand how depression works.

It is no fun, but still, the insights were amazing.

Reasons to Stay Alive is a very dark non-fiction book, although the light at the end of the tunnel was there eventually.

*"I am you and you are me.*

*We are alone, but not alone.*

*We are trapped by time, but also infinite.*

*Made of flesh, but also stars."*

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## **Sarah says**

3.5 stars.

I enjoyed reading this. It was such an honest and personal account of what Matt Haig went through. I could really relate to this but reading some parts were hard because of that. I kind of wish I read this when I was in a better mental space because I might have gotten more out of it but I think he did a really good job. I especially liked a passage that I have highlighted below about depression (I marked it with a \* to differentiate it from the other quotes).

I hope more people come forward and feel brave enough and safe enough to share their stories of what it is like to have depression, OCD, bipolar disorder, anxiety, etc because I would love to read more books like this one.

I would recommend it but I think you should be in a good headspace at that moment. I would also read more by Haig.

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"One of the key symptoms of depression is to see no hope. No future. Far from the tunnel having light at the end of it, it seems like it is blocked at both ends, and you are inside it."

"But in the end one needs more courage to live than to kill himself.' - Albert Camus, A Happy Death"

"I was a failure. A quitter. I had nothing at all on the horizon. I was sliding down, becoming vulnerable to an illness that was waiting in the wings. But I didn't realise it. Or I didn't care. I was just thinking of escape."

"The main thing is the intensity of it. It does not fit within the normal spectrum of emotions. When you are in it, you are really in it. You can't step outside it without stepping outside of life, because it is life. It is your life. Every single thing you experience is filtered through it. Consequently, it magnifies everything. At its most extreme, things that an everyday normal person would hardly notice have overwhelming effects."

"What doesn't kill you can make you scared to leave your house, or even your bedroom, and have you trembling, or mumbling incoherently, or leaning with your head on a window pane, wishing you could return to the time before the thing that didn't kill you."

"And my life - and my mess of a mind - needed shape. I had 'lost the plot'. There was no linear narrative of me. There was just mess and chaos."

"If you are the type of person who thinks too much about stuff then there is nothing lonelier in the world than being surrounded by a load of people on a different wavelength."

"Derealisation. It is a very real symptom that makes you feel, well, not real. You don't feel fully inside yourself. You feel like you are controlling your body from somewhere else."

\*"Depression is also... smaller than you. Always, it is smaller than you, even when it feels vast. It operates within you, you do not operate within it. It may be a dark cloud passing across the sky, but - if that is the metaphor - you are the sky. You were there before it. And the cloud can't exist without the sky, but the sky can exist without the cloud."\*

"Of course, it is never easy walking into a room full of people. There is that awkward moment of hovering around, like a serious lonely molecule, while everyone else is in their tight little circles, all laughter and conversation."

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### **Maxine (Booklover Catlady) says**

**FINALLY!** A book about depression that makes sense, that those with depression will read and sit nodding their heads and agreeing all the way through it. **No psychobabble here** (from Psychologists who have never experienced depression) - just real raw telling of Matt Haig's journey with the dreaded black dog. **This book should be given or bought by EVERYONE battling depression, or has a loved one battling it. It's everywhere you know.**

Matt so simply explains how it feels, he is so darn honest and all of what he says is true (trust me I know). He breaks it down into simple formats, like lists of what you feel like on a bad day or what you are thinking

and it's all stuff that NONE of the other books cover, it's really what is going on in your dark mind.

He tackles the issues of suicidal thoughts and tendencies and how scary it can be, nobody wants to talk about that right? But we need to.

A bit that resonated with me was about how withdrawn you become from the world, scared to go out on your own, or even with others, you need people but you can't cope with them. It's overwhelming. Matt mentions staring out of a window and watching people go by and thinking he just wants to be normal like them. I have done that, hundreds of times, with my cat by my side, wishing normal was in my scope.

It made me laugh in places too, it's gutsy and so freaking RIGHT. Loved this book, I read it in the wee hours of the morning relating to everything Matt has gone through and cheering for his moments of coming out of the darkness that is so devastating.

Let's get real about depression, it can hit anyone, it's not a choice, you can't just positive self-talk your way out of it. Just buy this book. 5 paw prints from the Booklover Catlady for this little gem.

**Nice job Matt, this one will help so many people. It should be given out at every counselling and therapy session for anyone with depression around the world.**

For more of my reviews, book talk, giveaways and much more go to:

[www.facebook.com/BookloverCatlady](http://www.facebook.com/BookloverCatlady)

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### **Joanne Harris says**

I received an ARC of this book from Canongate. My usual technique, when reading an ARC, is to read 5 pages, then take a view as to whether I'm going to actually read the book. With **REASONS TO STAY ALIVE**, I'd passed the 50-page mark before I remembered to take a view, and by then I was down the rabbit-hole. Matt Haig is a marvellous writer: limpid; tender; passionate. In this memoir (and it's short, barely 200 pages long), he manages to articulate, both the bleakness of depression and the means of dealing with it, little by little, day by day, without ever sounding maudlin, or self-indulgent, or preachy. For everyone who has ever felt the snap of the black dog's teeth, this book is wise, funny, affirming and redemptive. Sometimes depression can be like falling into a wordless pit. Matt Haig finds the words. And he says them for all of us.

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### **Emma says**

So good that it should be required reading. In schools. For GPs. Everyone. Haig says that each mind breaks differently, but I think his heartfelt words will say/mean something to anyone who has felt anxiety or depression. Some sections were so real that I had to put the book aside for a while.

It's brilliant and hopeful. My thanks to Matt Haig for sharing so much of himself. It's not something most of us are able to do.

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## April (Aprilius Maximus) says

Beautiful. Informative. Powerful.

Around the Year in 52 Books Challenge Notes:

- 34. A book about mental illness

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## Imane says

**“How to stop time: kiss.**

**How to travel in time: read.**

**How to escape time: music.**

**How to feel time: write.**

**How to release time: breathe.”**

**? Matt Haig, Reasons to Stay Alive**

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This was OK ! There were some bits i related to, others not so much. However, the writing style was simple and accessible, the paragraphs; short and concise. This is a good read if you're beginning your journey of learning about depression :)

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## Hattie Grünwald says

I won this proof on twitter from Matt and though I don't often review books here, I thought that probably I owed him that. Not just for giving me a free copy, but for writing the book in the first place.

Let me be honest, I started reading this and thought "This book isn't written for me". But then I thought "There are people I would like to read this, because it feels so familiar to me." I would like to give it to people who are close to people with depression and anxiety, but don't really understand it. I would like every depressed person to have an unlimited supply of copies to hand out to anyone who tells them to pull themselves together. I would like to just leave it on tube seats and cafe tables because I just think, if a few more people could understand how depression and anxiety felt, then maybe the world would be better.

And then I think it became a book for me. Because if you've ever felt otherwise, it's always good to collect more reasons to stay alive. More ways to stay alive. Because there will come a time again when you need them.

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So I think, maybe, this is a book for everyone. Required reading.

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## **Lotte says**

4.5/5 stars. If you've suffered from depression and/or anxiety yourself at some point in your life or you know someone that has (and it's very likely that you do) this book is an absolute must-read.

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## **Whitney Atkinson says**

4.5 stars

If you're easily triggered by descriptions of other people's mental illnesses, I would advice against reading this during low points. There's some very in-depth descriptions of his dark thoughts and the panic and depression he felt, and it was really uncomfortable to confront. I think the title misled me because I picked this book up on a bad night hoping it would be uplifting, but I almost immediately had to put it back down when I realized it wasn't going to help at all, just add to my spiraling. So definitely pick this up when you feel emotionally stable enough to confront very real descriptions of mental illness.

Matt talks several times about how he doesn't take medication and it scares him and he doesn't want to, which is a personal choice and that's fine, but there are **so** many people that do take meds and it works for them, and if I would have read this before getting on my anxiety medication, it probably would have scared me away from it even further than I already was.

The way that Matt phrased a lot of things was just spot-on. I don't suffer from depression, but when my anxiety is bad, it can be debilitating. I related to all his descriptions of the fear and the agoraphobia and almost everything else he touched on. Parts of this book were so powerful they brought tears to my eyes. He truly is a brilliantly talented writer, and i'm tempted to pick up some of his other books just because he had that much of a knack with words. But more than that, he just put the experience of living with debilitating mental illness into words. There were a few "solutions" to anxiety that I disagreed with (such as his telling the audience to avoid distractions because they're unhealthy, when I use distractions almost every day as a coping mechanism), but overall, I did tab several parts of this book to return to in the future.

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## **Julie Eilén says**

I feel like this book is a friend I very much needed.

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## **Vanessa says**

Wow. Wow. Wow. What an absorbing and powerful read. This was a book I purposefully set out to read slowly and in snippets mainly because many of the books themes took me to places too familiar and disturbing but I also couldn't look away instead I devoured this in almost one sitting. Like a tragic car accident you can't help staring at, I couldn't stop reading. There's times this book felt suffocating and uncomfortable like reliving a past nightmare. I even felt while reading this book a resurfacing of old feelings a sense of heightened anxiety...transference much? A lack of sleep was inevitable. Learning about someone's pain and suffering is not fun but it was comforting. I commend Matt Haig for his brutal honesty in depicting

the agonising realities of anxiety/depression. The descriptions almost gave me a twist in the stomach so gut wrenchingly real and awful. Being a lifelong anxiety sufferer the words on these pages were unbelievably accurate and insightful. I only wish this book was around when I was gripped in the worst periods of my life, how reassuring it would have been to know I didn't suffer alone. I won't forget this book. If I could hug it I would. 5 life affirming and enlightening stars.

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