FOR THOSE WHO
HAVE FOUND THEIR
BRAVE AND FOR
THOSE WHO ARE
STILL LOOKING
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LET'S GET TALKING.
We all have thoughts, feelings, and internal struggles. They’re all part of what makes us human. Our brains are complex, intricate, and unbelievably fascinating machines that serve as central command for our bodies and our lives day in and day out.

And yet, we don’t talk about our brains as much as we should. Mental health is a core component of our overall health, but finding ways to talk about it comes far less naturally—and can be far less accepted—than talking about our physical health.

(Don’t) Call Me Crazy is a conversation starter and guide to better understanding how and where mental health impacts us each and every day. This is neither a tool for diagnosis nor a medical guide. It’s a pulling back of the curtain and an opportunity to get up close and personal with mental health. It is by turns intense and raw, as well as humorous and lighthearted. It showcases a wide range of experiences, as well as the power and eccentricities of each person’s unique brain.
CHAPTER ONE

WHAT'S "CRAZY"?
Is there a single definition of what it means to be “crazy”? Is using the word “crazy” offensive to those struggling with mental illness and something to be avoided? What does it mean for people when labels like “crazy” are attached to their everyday experiences?

One of the best ways to understand mental health is, of course, to start talking about it. The more we talk, the more it becomes clear that there’s no single definition of “crazy,” that there’s no single experience of “crazy,” and that the word “crazy” itself means different things to different people. Some avoid labels, while others embrace them. There is power in language, and there’s power in what a word or a label can mean to each person.

“Crazy” is not a singular—or definitive—experience.
I have Doctor Who shoes. They’re custom-made Converse high-tops that I created online. They’re TARDIS blue with white detailing and a black strip down the back that says Police Box. I love those shoes and I wear them everywhere.

I am not, however, the Doctor.

My profession is that of author. I spend most days clacking away on a keyboard (another custom-made job, but one I built myself, with old-timey typewriter keys and a hardwood case), drinking coffee, and talking to my dog. Over the past six years, I have produced an average of two books per year, and all the subject matter I write about is very personal to me.

I am not, however, my books.

Many of my off-hours (and often when I have a day job) are spent working with computers. Programming, building hardware, tinkering. I learned to build computers when I was sixteen. I wrote my first bit of code when I was twenty. I have supported myself throughout the years working with computers, and I’ve enjoyed being able to make money doing something I love.

I am not, however, a computer.

When I was nineteen, I attempted suicide. I was diagnosed with a major depressive episode. I have since been diagnosed as having persistent depressive disorder. I just call it depression. Some days are better than others. Some years are better than others. When everything else in my life is going well, I know I’m about to go through...
an episode because I’ll begin to feel like I’m getting the flu. I become achy, exhausted, irritable. I have tried many different medications over the years but haven’t found one that works for me. I have come to accept that I will deal with depression for the rest of my life.

I am not, however, depression.

Depression does not define me. If I were to make a list of all the words I, or others, might use to describe me, it might include: “weird,” “inconsiderate,” “quiet,” “lonely,” “goofy,” “kind,” “awkward,” “focused,” and “depressed.” But those are simply different facets of the person people see when they see me. Depending on the time of day or whether I’ve had enough coffee or am on a deadline, a hundred people might walk away with an entirely different set of words they’d use to describe me. And while all those words might be useful for cataloging my behavior in one given circumstance, they would not and could not define me completely. Because we define words, not people.

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