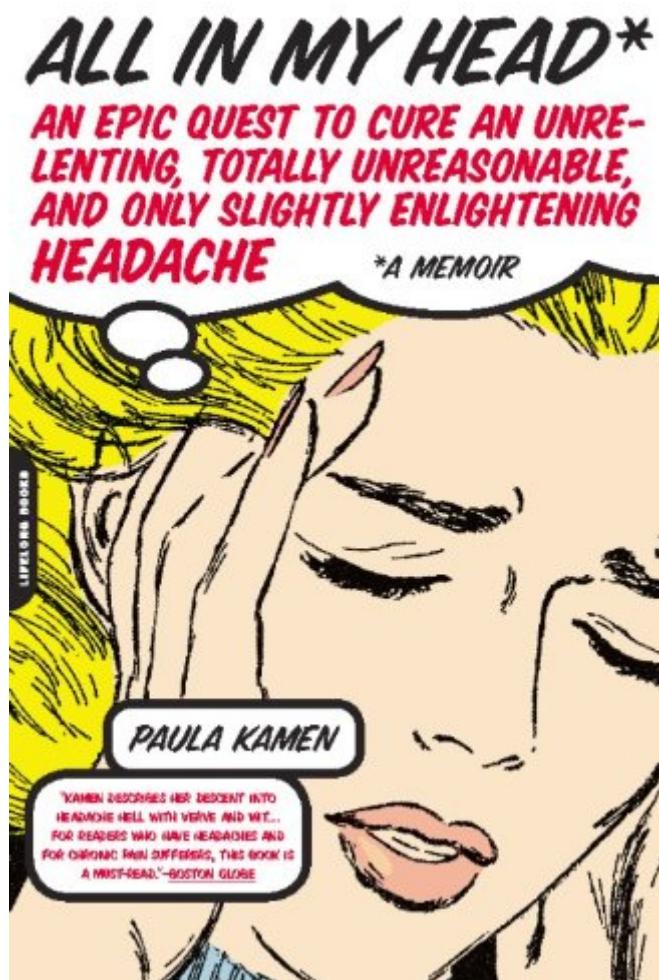


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All In My Head: An Epic Quest To Cure An Unrelenting, Totally Unreasonable, And Only Slightly Enlightening Headache



Synopsis

At the age of twenty-four, Paula Kamen's life changed in an instant. While she was putting in her contacts, the left lens disturbed a constellation of nerves behind her eye. The pain was more piercing than that of any other headache she had ever experienced. More than a decade later, she still has a headache-the exact same headache. From surgery to a battery of Botox injections to a dousing of Lithuanian holy water, from a mountain of pharmaceutical products to aromatherapy and even a vibrating hat, All in My Head chronicles the sometimes frightening, usually absurd, and always ineffective remedies Kamen-like so many others-tried in order to relieve the pain.

Beleaguered and frustrated by doctors who, frustrated themselves, periodically declared her pain psychosomatic, she came to understand the plight of the millions who suffer chronic pain in its many forms. Full of self-deprecating humor and razorsharp reporting, All in My Head is the remarkable story of patience, acceptance, and perseverance in the face of terrifying pain.

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Customer Reviews

Paula Kamen, a thirtysomething author and lecturer from Chicago, has suffered from a mysterious

headache (sometimes just bad, sometimes nearly intolerable) pretty much nonstop for the last fifteen years. In this smart, gutsy, no-holds-barred memoir, we follow her as she tries--with Herculean effort and Bhuddist patience--to find relief. It is not a pretty journey she is forced to undertake. Kamen escorts her reader through the decade and a half of her headache hell, but somehow manages to do it (unbelievably!) with a quirky, never-give-in sense of humor. It is not an exaggeration to say that, in reading this book, you might well be doing a lot of crying and a lot of laughing. The number of shills, quacks, charlatans, and snake-oil salesmen who parade throughout the chapters will give you a jolt. But the book is a lot more: Kamen spends a lot of time looking at how chronic pain, when it is not able to be quickly and successfully treated, starts creating resentment in the minds of medical professionals, in the minds of the families of chronic-pain sufferers, and (most tragically) in the minds of chronic-pain sufferers themselves. Much more than just a memoir of a single person's frustrations and travails, this book also offers a broad look at chronic pain in the United States today. Kamen has done her scientific research, and shares it (without going overboard or turning her book into a medical study) generously if compactly with her readers. The appendix of resources at the end of the book is particularly helpful, as is the bibliography. Like a pissed-off Joan of Arc, Kamen spends "All In My Head" wading in the medical, cultural, and social quagmire into which chronic-pain sufferers slowly sink, and, from the first page to the last, she's fighting. This book is a must-read for those with chronic pain, and highly recommended for their friends and families. In Paula Kamen they have found a co-traveler and ally.

This memoir approaches chronic headache pain from every perspective, developed through her own experience and urgent research: types, sources, doctors, drugs, the pharmaceutical industry, alternative medicine, spirituality, self image, coping, social attitudes, history of approaches and views -- you get the idea. Ms. Kamen is an excellent writer and I enjoyed her spirit and her wit, which she never over-uses as some writers do. She takes a massive amount of information and experience and integrates it in a meaningful way, which is an enormous accomplishment. I have had chronic migraines (though nothing as unremitting as hers), and learned a lot from this book.

Hooray for Ms. Kamen- after reading hundreds of books on chronic pain, this very gifted author has created a funny and very helpful path out of the Guilt Woods with this marvelous book. If you suffer from ANY kind of chronic pain- do yourself a favor and read this book. For the millions of us who have been used as lab rats by the pharmaceutical industry- Ms. Kamen's book offers insight that can help you find your own voice again.

When someone suffers with chronic pain and/or illness, it feels the world is out there and we are stuck in here... ALONE. As Ms. Kamen points out, not only are we not alone, but there are millions of us suffering in silence with these invisible illnesses. She details the history of medicine as it relates to such illnesses and pain (especially women), but also allows the reader to feel he/she is a part of a greater world that includes so many who are suffering. She intersperses her own story with intricately researched segments on the history of chronic daily headache/migraine, and medicine as a whole as it relates to this condition and other similar ones of pain and illness. What I liked so much about her book were the similarities to my own story. Literally, the timeline is almost identical. I tried everything she tried. I felt every emotion she felt. I reached every conclusion she did, and felt every ounce of despair and hope she felt. The reason this is so significant for me, is that it truly shows me that there are thousands or millions of people out there with a similar daily experience. I go through my life feeling like it's just me. I don't really know others with this disability, so I am singled out as the one 'headache girl' in my circle of friends. That leads to an incredible feeling of loneliness, and a pervading feeling that I am so unlucky and drew a really bad card in life. Having the knowledge that at least one other person has an almost identical story, makes me feel connected to others in a very profound way. Other readers may have differences with regards to their own journey, but I invite them to focus on the fact that we are all in this, together. That is what is important about this story and this book. We are NOT ALONE!

Amazingly informative, resolutely empowering and surprisingly touching memoir. I'm dying to know if Komen has continued her research on the neurological causes of severe headache since the book was published in 2006. I've recently started my journey into intensive treatment for my debilitating headaches. I've been stymied along the way because my headaches aren't "classic" migraines. Now I know exactly what I have -- very similar to Komen's Headache. I have chronic migraine. Thanks to this book, I feel much more able to articulate exactly what is wrong with me and what I want to try next. I'm looking forward to my next headache clinic visit. I'm armed with a list of questions and suggestions that will prepare me to be a more equal partner with the medical team. And what a comfort to know there are other Tired Girls out there. Almost a secret sorority. I've ordered two extra copies, one for my psychologist and one for the headache clinic. And I'm making my husband read it, too. Anybody suffering from chronic pain, not just headache, can get something out of this book. Bravo!

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