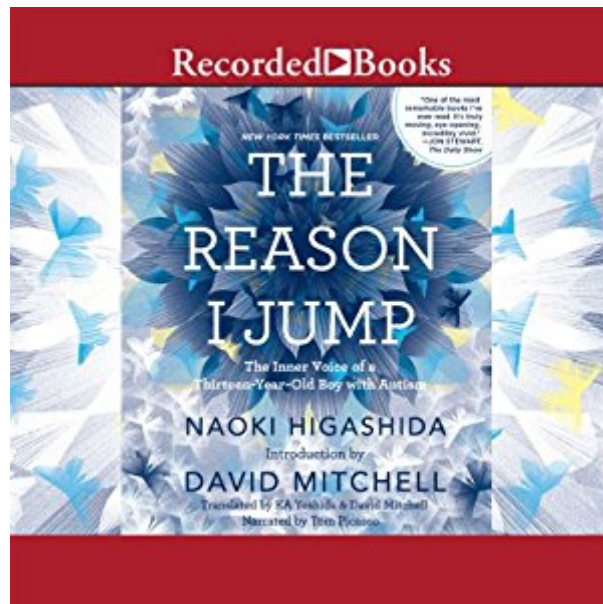


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The Reason I Jump: The Inner Voice Of A Thirteen-Year-Old Boy With Autism



Synopsis

You've never listened to a book like *The Reason I Jump*. Written by Naoki Higashida, a very smart, very self-aware, and very charming thirteen-year-old boy with autism, it is a one-of-a-kind memoir that demonstrates how an autistic mind thinks, feels, perceives, and responds in ways few of us can imagine. Parents and family members who never thought they could get inside the head of their autistic loved one at last have a way to break through to the curious, subtle, and complex life within. Using an alphabet grid to painstakingly construct words, sentences, and thoughts that he is unable to speak out loud, Naoki answers even the most delicate questions that people want to know. Questions such as: "Why do people with autism talk so loudly and weirdly?" "Why do you line up your toy cars and blocks?" "Why don't you make eye contact when you're talking?" and "What's the reason you jump?" (Naoki's answer: "When I'm jumping, it's as if my feelings are going upward to the sky.") With disarming honesty and a generous heart, Naoki shares his unique point of view on not only autism but life itself. His insights - into the mystery of words, the wonders of laughter, and the elusiveness of memory - are so startling, so strange, and so powerful that you will never look at the world the same way again.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 2 hours and 28 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Recorded Books

Audible.com Release Date: September 10, 2013

Language: English

ASIN: B00F2QG1E6

Best Sellers Rank: #19 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Children's Health > Autism & Asperger's Syndrome #23 in Books > Parenting & Relationships > Special Needs > Disabilities #41 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Professionals & Academics > Medical

Customer Reviews

I read a lot of books about autism because my brother is severely autistic. I am very thankful to Naoki Higashida for answered questions that I have about my brother's behavior and the way that he thinks. And also answering some questions that had not even occurred to me! His voice came through this book as very genuine and I have recognized some of the same feelings in my brother

as Nagoki Higashida. In fact I wish that my brother had the experience of being trained to use the special keyboard. So many things are locked inside for my brother but Nagoki has let some of them out via the keyboard. My brother also jumps. He always does this just before he starts a walk. He also loves to walk in places filled with nature. He wanted to go to a park when I asked him where on our latest visit. I have read quite a few books written by Asperger's but this one by a boy who has autism rings home for me. My brother can speak but usually he does not initiate any conversation, he is limited to a few words of a reply. I can see the struggle that he goes through when he is trying to "grab" something to say. I was aware of the overload of senses but I didn't realize that the floors could be tilting for him. That must be why he touches the wall here and there trying to get some balance. I thought that the author really conveyed how regular people can hurt people with autism's feelings. I knew that from being with my brother. I have heard people talk about my brother in front of him and that is mean. I know the author would feel the same way. This book is very valuable for understanding autism and I wish that caregivers in group homes and others who work with people who have autism would read this book. When I read this book, I truly wanted more. I am hoping that there will be a place in the future where we can send out questions to you. I have so much more that I want to learn. If you have a family member who has autism please read this book. I received this book as a win from FirstReads but that in no way influenced my thoughts or feelings in the review.

Another reviewer of this book gave it 1 star, apparently because she questioned its authenticity. That is, she questioned whether it is truly the work of an autistic young man, as it is claimed to be. Considering the book's subject matter, it is perhaps not surprising that her suspicion was met with sometimes vitriolic comments, as some readers seemed to take it as an affront to their intensely-lived personal experience. But at the risk of attracting similar attacks, I must admit to my own kind of skepticism. Certainly, the aforementioned reviewer's focus on word choice is irrelevant here as a criterion by which to infer authorship, as this is a translation. But I agree with that reviewer's concern about the author's tendency to speak for all autistic people. Though some comments questioned this observation, it is not merely an interpretation or projection; Mr. Higashida does in fact repeatedly and explicitly speak for all autistic people. If you don't yet have the book, you can see just as well in the preview the repeated use of "we" or "us" in phrases and sentences that characterize a behavior, attitude, belief or experience as common to all autistic people. This is an appropriate cause for concern, as there is great diversity in all populations, including those with autism. It would be unfortunate if readers without direct experience to the contrary were misled into

thinking that one autistic person can speak for all. So it is offensive that several comments insult that reviewer for observing this tendency, accusing her of inventing this notion, as if it is she who thinks all autistic people are alike. Such rough treatment demonstrates the most dangerous kind of ignorance, the kind that is too arrogant (or perhaps simply too necessary) to recognize itself. That is, the literal kind, in which one actively ignores relevant information to maintain an opinion. But I only mention this because it suggests another, perhaps more fundamental, problematic I encountered in reading this book, one that may help to explain both the aggression and the seemingly willful ignorance of those reactions. As I read this book, one feeling kept insisting itself, until it was something more than a feeling, though perhaps not yet a fully-formed thought. I didn't like this thought, but I couldn't help it: It all felt too good to be true. It seemed that everything this young man thought and said was so... perfect. So perfectly what his mother, or perhaps any parent in a similar position, maybe all those who care for loved ones with autism, would wish their autistic loved one to say, if only they could, or would, or... I find it difficult to follow this through. It seems wrong even to question it. But I recognized in these pages again and again this 'wish-fulfillment' quality, until it was difficult to ignore and, as in a dream, I began to question their reality. Waking life is just so seldom so in accord with my wishes. For these reasons and others, I don't think it inappropriate to wonder aloud about how many acts of translation took place between the various way-points in this book's journey to this publication, and how they might have shaped the text as it is now. After all, just a list of the most obvious intermediaries suggests a game of telephone: there's Mr. Higashida himself, his mother who invented his method of communication, the Japanese editor(s) and publishers, Ms. Yoshida the translator into English, David Mitchell her husband and co-translator, the English editor(s) and publishers, and who knows how many others along the way. All of these people were translators of a sort, and at least a plurality of these translators have personal (and therefore inevitably complicated, emotional, fraught) relationships with loved ones with autism. Because there can so often seem to be such an unbridgeable gulf between, as Mr. Higashida puts it, 'earthling' and 'autisman' (and of course here I'm thinking especially of the more severe instantiations), and because it is in that gulf that the messy stuff of life happens, it must be that each of those translators wish as intensely as any of us do to leap, to soar across, intact and understood. It must be that so many of them, like so many of us, have no greater wish than to meet a perfect representative. To meet one who can speak from the other side, on this side, one who will tell us exactly what we have always hoped is true. Perhaps there is value in this book, then, whether it truly bears that wish-fulfilling voice, or merely approximates it. But as for me, I find myself still inside, not yet across, the gulf.

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