

## **Mom's Story - A Child Learns About MS Book Reviews**

“What is MS?

Before reading Mary's story, I as an adult did not fully understand the disease. Mary tells the story of a family's sudden discovery that the mother had something terribly wrong with her. She told it in a way that children as well as adults can clearly understand. She also tells it from different perspectives. The child who just wants to know what is wrong with her mother so she can help her to the brother who doesn't want to face that anything is wrong and wants to just go about his daily life.

Most people when they hear that someone is diagnosed with MS fear that their loved one has just been given a slow death sentence. However; Mary makes it very clear that MS is a manageable disease and that the worst part is that with MS you never know how you are going to feel from one moment to the next.

I recommend "Mom's Story" to every parent, teacher, child and library. It not only explains MS, it also gives children the message that when someone you know and love is having health problems, that by getting an accurate diagnosis, getting as much information, as well as understanding that information about the disease, is a huge benefit to the patient and the entire family. The healing can then begin.”

Reviewed by Allyn M. Stotz (Baton Rouge, LA)  
January 7, 2010

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“Ms. Nickum has woven a very natural and sensitive story of a family who must cope with the realization that one parent has a chronic illness. In coping, they find that knowledge is power that dispels fear.

From personal insight and sensitivity, the author develops the various reactions of the characters as they attempt to deal with their complex feelings of trying to accept and understand the chronic illness of a parent.

Although it is especially written for children, all family members who need support in understanding a chronic illness and how it can affect a family should read this book. Children's support groups for dealing with chronically ill parents will find this book especially helpful.

An excellent beginners guide and source for printed and audio-visual resources available to learn more about MS.

Reviewed by R E Westphal (reviewer John G. Nickum)

December 30, 2009

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“Mom's Story is a quick and easy read. It is a story about a nine-year-old child who learns that her mother has Multiple Sclerosis (MS). The book delves into the processes involved from the first symptoms to a diagnosis, all while depicting the main character's emotions and reactions as well as those of her siblings. The family goes from the initial fear that is common when a loved one is diagnosed with MS, to learning about the illness. Knowledge about MS helps a great deal to alleviate those initial fears.

While the child is learning about MS, Nickum cleverly weaves tidbits of information on how online help can be found for those interested in learning about MS. In addition to this, at the end of the book the author included a section titled Information Resources for Families. These pages contain sources of additional information in the form of websites, books, videos, and DVDs that help aid in the understanding of MS.

The education doesn't end there though, there are a number of other features in Mom's Story that help with a child's understanding of MS. With simplicity, Nickum incorporates the pronunciation of technical words associated with MS into the story. Words such as optic neuritis (op-tik nur-I'-tis), and demyelination (dee-mi-lin-A'-shun) are written again in parenthesis breaking the word down for easy pronunciation. This is a wonderful tool for children and adults as some of the words are difficult to pronounce. The author also included a glossary. Words such as Central Nervous System (CNS), MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging), and Myelin are explained in a manner that children will be able to comprehend.

In addition to this, Nickum included pages for Facts about MS, Types of MS, Symptoms of MS, and What is an MRI? The Symptoms page is actually the only aspect of the book that I questioned - the symptoms of MS didn't include fatigue which is a very common complaint with MS sufferers. She did, however, mention it in the story itself.

Mom's Story is a 74 page book that walks a child, through the voice of a nine-year-old, on the path of understanding MS. As a sufferer of MS, I know that any life altering and disabling chronic illness is difficult to deal with, for the patient and their family. Nickum has managed to provide a very informative and engaging book that handles a complex subject matter very well with easy to understand content. I highly recommend Mom's Story - A Child Learns About MS.”

Reviewed by Karen Cioffi-Ventrice of BookPleasures (New York, USA)  
Author of: Day's End Lullaby  
December 18, 2009

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“A Must Read!

Eight-year-old Amy is practicing the piano when she hears a loud thump. Running into the kitchen she finds her mother sitting on the floor.

Why did Amy's mom fall? Amy starts to worry because Mom never falls. Then, Mom starts dropping things. One day, Mom almost goes blind in one eye. Dad takes her to the emergency room where some tests are run. Mom is also given an appointment at the Specialty Clinic. Thus, starts Amy and her family's journey to learn about Multiple Sclerosis.

Amy's big sister goes to the library and borrows several items about the disease. Dad, Mom and Amy turn to the internet and look up the website for the National MS Society. Through Amy's journey she learns what she can do to help Mom. She also learns that MS is nothing to be ashamed of. Her big brother, Tony, still has to learn this.

We follow Amy as she learns about the disease. She's very sad and turns to her best friend, Kayla. It turns out that Kayla's aunt has it too.

As a fellow MS'er, I fully recommend this book since so many children have a family member suffering from this disease. This is an easy to read and understand book explaining MS to children. Not only does Ms. Nickum insert the pronunciation of the terms of MS but there is also a glossary in the back of this book where she explains them.

Also, in the back of the book the author lists several resources that will help you on your journey to learn about this heart wrenching disease.”

Reviewed by Deborah S. Hockenberry "kidztales"  
December 8, 2009

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“Mary Jo Nickum has been living with MS since 1989. There are about 400,000 people in the US with MS. 200 People are diagnosed with it every week. 2.5 Million people have it worldwide.

While this story is fictional, the information it presents is factual. The story is about a family of five. The mother, father, Tony & Kelly the twins, and Amy the youngest. It begins with a fall, then a plate of dropped eggs, followed by temporary blindness. The Verdict MS. This is where the most important parts of this book come in. The questions people have when faced with a debilitating disease, or in this case, kids have about a parent facing them. You have Amy who's worried that her mom is going to die, and about

how life is going to change. Then there's Tony, who it seems feels a bit embarrassed that his family isn't going to be "normal" anymore. I was able to relate to the kids, and understand what was going through their heads.

I think this would be a great book for children whose parents have been diagnosed with MS. I also think the ideas behind it could be used to discuss any major parental illness with children, such as getting the videos, books, internet research, etc. Kids get afraid very easy, and to deny the facts in order to protect them can sometimes make things much worse.

The Author includes a section on internet resources, places to get videos that were suggested, a glossary of terms, and information on MS itself. If you or someone you know has MS, and has children, I'd recommend this book.”

Reviewed by R. Rhodes "Rick Rhodes" (Ohio)  
November 30, 2009

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“...Mary provides the basic facts about MS, facts that every child should know if there is a family member with the disease and that they can easily understand. The book provides plenty of useful resources such as websites, books, DVDs, associations and groups. There is also a glossary on MS-related terms and an explanation on basic types of MS and the MRI procedure. I admit, I learned a lot from it. A spot that made my heart cringe was when Amy asks if mommy was going to die. No child should be faced with this question without a quick and reassuring **NO!**”

<http://willingtoseeless.blogspot.com/2009/11/moms-story-child-learns-about-ms.html>

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pronounce. The author also included a glossary. Words such as Central Nervous System (CNS), MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging), and Myelin are explained in a manner that children will be able to comprehend."

<http://www.bookpleasures.com/websitepublisher/articles/1511/1/Moms-Story-A-Child-Learns-About-MS-Reviewed-By-Karen-Coiffi-Ventrice/Page1.html>

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<http://rhodesreview.com/?p=407>

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From personal insight and sensitivity, the author develops the various reactions of the characters as they attempt to deal with their complex feelings of trying to accept and understand the chronic illness of a parent. Although it is especially written for children, all family members who need support in understanding a chronic illness and how it can affect a family should read this book. Children's support groups for dealing with chronically ill parents will find this book especially helpful.

An excellent beginners guide and source for printed and audio-visual resources available to learn more about MS."

[relainewest@hotmail.com](mailto:relainewest@hotmail.com)

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"Mary Nickum, Scottsdale Writer's Group member, has published her book, Mom's Story. The book centers around a little girl who finds out that her mother has been diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. Mary has deftly woven a fictional tale with facts about

MS, and how family members learn to live with this disease – some better than others. The 80 page book is told from the child’s point of view, and is meant for other children and families to better understand what it means to have MS.”

[Scottsdale Writers’ Group http://scottsdalewriter.wordpress.com](http://scottsdalewriter.wordpress.com)

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“This is a book every parent with MS needs. It provides a clear explanation which a child can understand.

Nickum’s style is simple and clear in words a young reader can grasp. I loved the way Nickum shows a frightened young child facing the unknown that is taking place right in front of them. Although this is a book for children, I learned a lot about MS.”

[Gloria's Corner](#)

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