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Is It All in Your Head?: True Stories of Imaginary Illness

Suzanne O'Sullivan

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Is It All in Your Head?: True Stories of Imaginary Illness Suzanne O'Sullivan
A neurologist's insightful and compassionate look into the misunderstood world of psychosomatic disorders, told through individual case histories

It's happened to all of us: our cheeks flush red when we say the wrong thing, or our hearts skip a beat when a certain someone walks by. But few of us realize how much more dramatic and extreme our bodies' reactions to emotions can be. Many people who see their doctor have medically unexplained symptoms, and in the vast majority of these cases, a psychosomatic cause is suspected. And yet, the diagnosis of a psychosomatic disorder can make a patient feel dismissed as a hypochondriac, a faker, or just plain crazy.

In IS IT ALL IN YOUR HEAD? neurologist Suzanne O'Sullivan, MD, takes us on a journey through the world of psychosomatic illness, where we meet patients such as Rachel, a promising young dancer now housebound by chronic fatigue syndrome, and Mary, whose memory loss may be her mind's way of protecting her from remembering her husband's abuse. O'Sullivan reveals the hidden stresses behind their mysterious symptoms, approaching a sensitive topic with patience and understanding. She addresses the taboos surrounding psychosomatic disorders, teaching us that "it's all in your head" doesn't mean that something isn't real, as the body is often the stand-in for the mind when the latter doesn't possess the tools to put words to its sorrow. She encourages us to look with compassion at the ways in which our brains act out, and to question our failure to credit the intimate connection between mind and body.

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