



Discover. Read. Share.

WHY WE LOVE *EVERYTHING IS HORRIBLE AND WONDERFUL*

Dear Reader,

I urge you to read, enjoy, and ponder *Everything Is Horrible and Wonderful* by Stephanie Wittels Wachs – and not only because it is my actual full-time job to persuade you to do so. To the 126+ American and Canadian families every single day that lose a member to opioid overdose, this story is a painful reality. Stephanie's story, and that of her brother Harris—that horrible part of the story where a big sister loses her little brother, her only sibling, to addiction— is all too prevalent. It is my own story too.

I urged my brother to do anything but one more hit of heroin (or is it a *shot? dose?* – like Stephanie, I am not intimate with the lingo). Unfortunately, as this “Why We Love...” book club resource goes out for all the world to see, I am experiencing the five-year anniversary of my little brother Matthew's death. Matthew had a very long battle with mental illness that ended in suicide at the age of just 25, but it was ultimately his very short dance with opioids – pills promising pain relief that quickly devolved to an inescapable dependence on heroin – that propelled him into a painfully hopeless downward spiral. This spiral, the feeling of being in a battle you will never win, is one Stephanie describes Harris also finding himself in.

To lose your lone sibling is to find yourself unable to articulate, unable to laugh, and unable to understand how you might move forward in life. They are your heart, your history. They are the person you whisper almost mean, somewhat rude, but ultimately well-meaning things about your wacky parents to from across the dinner table (for me, no one else has filled that void). They are your half. Yet, instead of shutting down without her ‘Harris half,’ Stephanie gifted us with this book. In the year after her brother passed, she put on the page everything she couldn't tell him, and just this spring gave it to us in a bright yellow package. Not only a sunshiny color, but with the names of our favorite comedians and the word “tragicomic” emblazoned on the cover – perhaps so we would not be afraid to open it and learn that one does, in fact, keep going.

In this book, Stephanie writes with such humanity that we, as readers, can't help but feel we know her and Harris. I feared, because of my personal experience, my bias was leading me to love this book more than other book club members might. But...I farmed it out to friends and co-workers who remain untouched by opioids threatening all they hold dear and, I'm happy to report, not only do they love the book, but they're also now part of the Harris fan club. And, they are a little more educated on the effects of addiction. And might read another book on it. And might change the world, or their corner of it. Another thing I'm urging along and hoping for...daily.

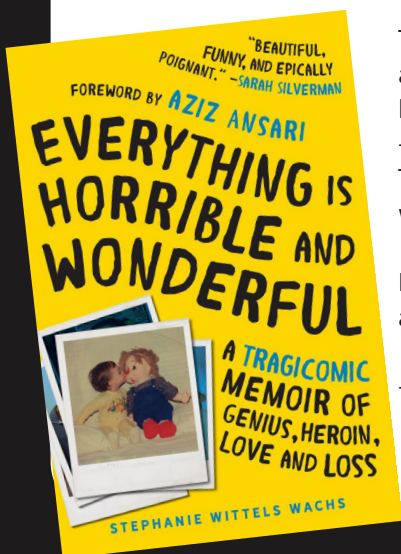
Harris, Stephanie, and their parents (and Mike and Iris too) are so relatable, infuriating, lovable, sharp, and funny that you can't help rooting for them throughout this book, even if you know before it even really begins that the fairy tale ending isn't coming. Because although loss is horrible, life – in all of its maddening twists and turns (and roundhouse kicks to the jaw)-is still so very wonderful. *Everything Is Horrible and Wonderful* is so well written that, despite the daunting subject matter, it will make you laugh more often than it makes you cry. You'll even laugh when it's utterly inappropriate, and that's okay – just remember Harris, who arguably built an unmatched career on that very phenomenon. Like Harris said, “We're all horrible and wonderful and figuring it out.”

There is a story behind every addict, and a family too. Stephanie didn't set out to write a book about the opioid crisis, but about family. And while this book is not solely about addiction, she has crafted a book of unimaginable power and captured – in the way no book I have read ever has – the way addiction hurts not only the user, but every individual in its path. Please read this book. The health of our communities depends on learning from shared stories, and I urge you to begin with Stephanie's.

From a big sister and a book lover, thank you in advance for reading, enjoying, and pondering this book.

- Lindsay Williams, hoopla Digital

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About the Author

Stephanie Wittels Wachs is a writer whose work has been featured on *Vox*, *Longform*, *Huffington Post*, *Fatherly*, *Mamamia*, *Babble*, and *Medium*. Other significant roles include mother, theatre artist, educator, and voice actor. She graduated from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts and went on to receive her Master's from University of Houston School of Theatre and Dance. She is co-founder of Rec Room Arts, a non-profit arts organization committed to developing innovative work across disciplines. Find her comedic musings on parenting (and life) on her weekly podcast, *Hands Off Parents*. She lives in Houston, Texas, with her family.



Selected Praise

"Beautiful, funny, and epically poignant." - Sarah Silverman

"Harrowing, heartbreaking, and cathartic memoir...Wachs writes with immense love, humor, and humanity... Everything about this book is horrible, wonderful, timely, and not to be missed." - *Booklist*

"Unsentimental and at times even funny, *Everything Is Horrible and Wonderful* is Wachs' journey to make sense of the senseless, to move from grief to hope, and to let humor light the way." - *Bustle*

"In unflinching detail and with remarkable openness, Wachs describes the ugly and complicated nature of mourning someone who was not only a brother and best friend, but also an addict, a public figure, and a comedic genius whose life was cut off at the very cusp of success...a powerful debut that will resonate especially with readers who have loved and lost someone to addiction." - *Kirkus*

"Every minute more of us know the unique pain of helplessly watching someone we care about descend into the pit of addiction. Stephanie Wittels Wachs has been there, and she emerges with her wit, wisdom, and spirit intact. This remarkable and movingly told story will break and mend hearts." - David Sheff, author of *Beautiful Boy* and *Clean*

"Brutally honest and honestly beautiful, *Everything Is Horrible and Wonderful* is so much more than a story of how addiction can tear a family apart; it's a magnificent tribute to a brother and to the perfectly imperfect family that we all have. The clarity with which Stephanie Wittels Wachs describes addiction, death and its aftermath comes through on every page... she lays bare the ugliest truths without demonizing the destructive behavior of an addict. Threaded through with the fiercest unconditional love, this is an absolutely gorgeous book." - Matt Logelin, author of *Two Kisses for Maddy*

"Stephanie Wittels Wachs is honest, funny, moving, and so likable. She shows us the messy truth about losing someone you love-that there is no map for its tremendous pain and unexpected moments of joy." - Kerry Cohen, author of *Loose Girl* and *Lush*

"As described in this touching memoir, grief is a familial phantom limb constantly tapping the shoulders of the survivors...a story ultimately about renewal and hope." - *Houston Chronicle*