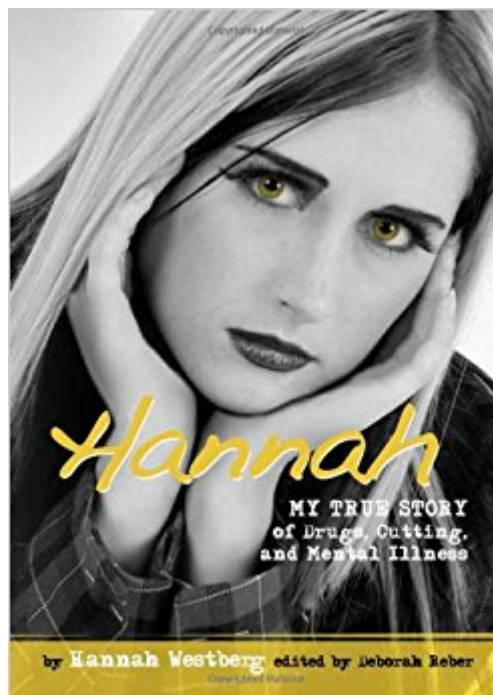




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# Hannah: My True Story Of Drugs, Cutting, And Mental Illness (Louder Than Words)



## Synopsis

Hannah is a girl interrupted. ã ã For Hannah Westberg, life has been one big emotional roller coaster. As a girl, her mother was in and out of mental hospitals, so when it was her turn to visit the psych ward following a suicide attempt the summer after eighth grade, she had an idea of what she was in for. But that was only the beginning of Hannah's journey. ã ã Over the next five years, Hannah has engaged in dangerous behaviors--from pill popping and excessive dieting to cutting--and paid a high price. Her depression, self-harm, and suicidal tendencies have landed her in rehab and therapy and with a diagnosis of borderline personality disorder. But though she may have a label for her mental illness and tools for coping, for Hannah, life is still something she takes one day at a time.'The psych ward is where you go to get from fragile to shattered. It's like taking your car to get washed and getting your windshield broken in the process.' Because Truth Is More Fascinating Than Fiction [www.louderthanwordsbooks.com](http://www.louderthanwordsbooks.com)

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Hannah Westberg is eighteen years old. She earned her GED and plans to enroll in Portland Community College's drug and alcohol counselor certification program. When she's not babysitting, she is probably volunteering for political and charity organizations, as well as participating in flash mobs.

I FOUND OUT THE EXTENT to which my childhood was fucked up when I began writing this book. I thought my bed-wetting, inappropriate anger, stealing, and running away were just quirks . . . that I

was a bad seed. Of course, my mother's strange upbringing, childhood trauma, and abusive first husband could've only led to horrible things. Nobody could have gone through what she did and emerge unscathed. Even as I sit down to write, I'm not quite sure how to approach my childhood memories. Perhaps as the bomb squad approaches a mysterious package: tentatively, as if any little touch might set off an explosion. But I'll just dive in. Everything that could explode already has. I just have to watch out for sparks as I clean up the mess left behind. Okay, it's not as if my childhood was so tragic. There was no big trauma. Just a lot of mess. I'll start at the beginning. My mother met her first husband, George, at an Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meeting when she was nineteen. George, however, was not attending the meeting—he was merely waiting outside and drinking. He married and impregnated her soon after. He was always taking out loans and never repaying them. He was always on the run from the law and wanted in different states for unpaid speeding tickets and DUIs. He had moved my mother and my brother, Nevada, to Reno to flee his latest charges. From what I've heard, he was the classic abuser of both my mother and my brother. He would get drunk and beat my mom. He would flick my baby brother in the head, swing him around in a terrifying way. He would watch hardcore porn in front of my toddler brother. He would drive drunk with baby Nevada in the front seat. His crazy roommate shot him in the leg, right past my mother, past Nevada's playpen. My mother finally left him, but before they could get divorced, he was murdered—handcuffed to a tree and shot by one of the people he'd ripped off, of which there were many. My father is George's brother, and though his childhood wasn't much better than my mother's, his mental health was. The first sign that his marriage to my mom wouldn't last was that they met in AA. They fell in love, ignored codependency issues, and quickly became engaged. My father adopted Nevada when my brother was still young, and for a while, the three of them looked like the picture-perfect family. Mom converted to Catholicism and they were active in the church. Dad introduced her to the pro-life movement and she became obsessed with it. She used breast-feeding and the rhythm method as the only acceptable forms of birth control. As a result, she had my sister Sarah when Nevada was seven, Rachel three years later, and me two years after that. While we were kids, my mom became increasingly manic, but not in totally destructive ways. She held down a job and raised four children, always being tender and loving to each one of us. She gave us baby massages, sang Bob Dylan, took us to the park and the library. She carried me to the hospital when I got chicken pox in my throat and got dehydrated. She lived for her children. This only spurred on her pro-life activism. She would stay up all night writing letters and articles. She received local fame for her feminist pro-life stance and her graphic drawings of third-term abortions. She was arrested more than once for protesting outside abortion

clinics. She believed more and more that she was on a mission from God. Once, during a bad ice storm, she got into the car, convinced that she had to go to city hall to get the floor plans of an abortion clinic in town. When her organization started advocating the murder of abortionists, she left, but she shifted her mania elsewhere. She stopped sleeping with my father. She had never enjoyed sex. It either reminded her of obligation sex with her abusive first husband or of the gang rape she experienced as a teen. After four children, she couldn't handle the emotional burden any longer. She nearly wiped out their savings. According to Mom, she made random purchases that she couldn't keep track of, but Dad had suspicions that she spent it on prescription medications, which she was abusing. She started drinking again. One time she got drunk, decided that she had to leave us, and got into the car. Her mother hung on to the car, trying to stop her, and she dragged Grandma behind her. She starved herself down to ninety pounds. She tried to kill herself in different ways, mainly by overdosing. Eventually, she sought help. At first she went to an unlicensed Catholic psychiatrist who diagnosed demon possession in my mother. After the exorcism supposedly failed, the psychiatrist told my mother she couldn't see her anymore. Mom was devastated. She truly believed she was hopelessly possessed because she didn't know what else to believe. Eventually, she was given the correct diagnosis: schizoaffective disorder. This was after being treated for alcoholism, anorexia-bulimia, suicidality, and manic depression, all things that were symptoms of the disorder. Schizoaffective combines the mania and depression of bipolar disorder and the psychosis of schizophrenia. On top of that, my dad was suffering from depression and couldn't take care of her. It's about this time when my first memory comes in. I was two years old. My sisters and I waited outside the kitchen and watched as our parents screamed at each other. I didn't care. I wanted some chips. I walked into the kitchen, even though my sisters tried to stop me. 'You stole my wallet!'

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I always love reading true stories. However it was kind of all over the place. Kind of lost me near the end. Finished the book with a sigh of finally. Not my fav.

I would recommend this book for clients experiencing the same/similar situation. It is a easy and good read. I only wish that it went more into about how she is now doing and how is overcoming her childhood.

A good book for a teen or young adult who is struggling. Adults may find it useful too, but it has a young person's feel.

An emotional ride very true to bpd. Hannah's story could very well be my own. I couldn't stop reading once I started.

I haven't read this book yet but have read others in the louder than word books they stop and make you think.

Very interesting and informative! Great lessons for teenagers! My 15 year old daughter is very inspired by what these girls went thru!

Great book - loved it

great

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