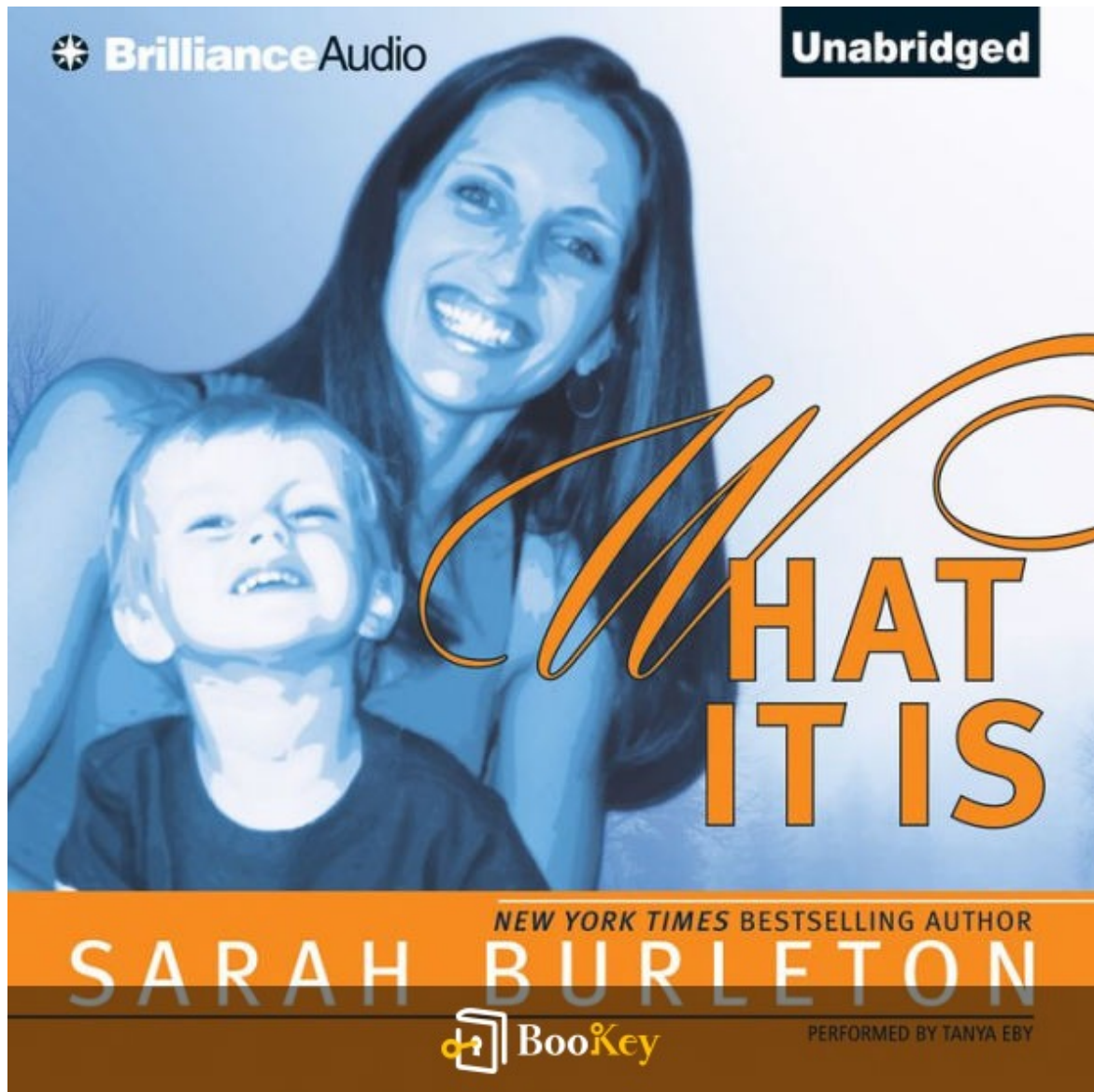


What It Is PDF

Sarah Burleton, Tanya Eby



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About the book

In the highly anticipated follow-up to her New York Times bestseller, **Why Me**, Sarah Burleton takes readers on an intense journey of healing and confrontation. This gripping sequel delves deeper into Sarah's struggle to reconcile the devastating physical and emotional abuse from her past. As she bravely navigates her traumatic memories, Sarah eventually confronts the woman who inflicted years of torment upon her.

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What It Is Summary

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Who should read this book What It Is

The book "What It Is" by Sarah Burleton, narrated by Tanya Eby, is an essential read for individuals seeking a deeper understanding of personal identity and the intricacies of life experiences. It particularly resonates with readers who have endured challenges, whether emotional, psychological, or societal, and are looking for relatable narratives that can inspire healing and resilience. Moreover, this book appeals to those interested in personal development, as it offers insights into navigating the complexities of relationships and self-acceptance. Additionally, educators, mental health professionals, and advocates for social change will find value in the themes explored, making it a profound resource for fostering empathy and awareness.

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Key insights of What It Is in table format

Title	What It Is
Authors	Sarah Burleton, Tanya Eby
Genre	Memoir / Self-help
Main Themes	Mental health, personal growth, overcoming trauma
Summary	The book chronicles Sarah Burleton's journey through trauma, depression, and healing. It offers insights into her struggles with mental health and provides encouragement and strategies for others facing similar challenges. Through personal anecdotes and reflections, the authors aim to destigmatize mental illness and promote self-acceptance and resilience. They emphasize the importance of seeking help, building a supportive community, and understanding one's own value.

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What It Is Summary Chapter List

1. Chapter 1: Understanding the Impact of Mental Illness on Daily Life
2. Chapter 2: Navigating Relationships with Loved Ones Who Suffer
3. Chapter 3: The Role of Empathy in Healing and Support
4. Chapter 4: Overcoming Stigma: How Society Views Mental Health
5. Chapter 5: Practical Strategies for Managing Mental Health Challenges
6. Chapter 6: Finding Hope and Healing in a Complex Journey

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1. Chapter 1: Understanding the Impact of Mental Illness on Daily Life

In this chapter, Burleton and Eby delve into the profound effects that mental illness can have on individuals' day-to-day experiences. They argue that mental illness is not merely a personal struggle but a condition that reverberates through various aspects of life, affecting emotional well-being, physical health, relationships, and even professional endeavors.

The authors begin by illustrating how mental health disorders can disrupt routine activities. For those facing anxiety, the daily act of leaving the house could become overwhelming due to crippling fears or panic attacks. Similarly, depression can render mundane tasks like showering, feeding oneself, or engaging with others feel insurmountable. The emotional toll of such conditions often leads to isolation, creating a vicious cycle that exacerbates the illness.

Burleton and Eby also highlight the impact of mental illness on cognitive functions. Individuals may struggle with memory, concentration, and decision-making, which complicates not just work life but also personal relationships. This impairment can further alienate those suffering from mental illness, as they may appear irresponsible or unmotivated to others who do not understand the underlying health issues.



Moreover, the authors explore the physical health implications often intertwined with mental illness. Chronic stress induced by mental health challenges can lead to a plethora of health problems, including heart disease, lifestyle-related disorders, and other chronic conditions. The mind-body connection is emphasized, as physical health deteriorates or improves in conjunction with mental health states, highlighting the importance of addressing both in treatment plans.

Burleton and Eby also emphasize the importance of recognizing mental illness not just as an individual issue but as a societal one. The community's response—or lack thereof—can significantly influence an individual's recovery journey. Negative experiences, such as discrimination and misunderstanding from family, friends, and coworkers, can hinder access to necessary support and resources. This societal influence underscores the need for a more comprehensive understanding and acknowledgment of mental health issues.

Throughout the chapter, a recurring theme emerges: the need for compassion and understanding when addressing mental health challenges. The authors advocate for an environment where discussions about mental illness are normalized, fostering openness and reducing feelings of shame and isolation. By promoting an understanding of how profoundly mental illness can affect daily life, Burleton and Eby aim to create a pathway towards greater



awareness, acceptance, and ultimately, healing.

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2. Chapter 2: Navigating Relationships with Loved Ones Who Suffer

In Chapter 2, "Navigating Relationships with Loved Ones Who Suffer," Burleton and Eby delve into the intricate dynamics that arise when a family member or friend is grappling with mental illness. This chapter emphasizes the essential role of understanding, patience, and open communication in fostering meaningful connections with loved ones who are enduring these struggles.

The chapter begins by highlighting the emotional toll that mental illness can take not only on the afflicted individual but also on their close connections. Loved ones often find themselves feeling helpless, frustrated, and even overwhelmed as they strive to support someone in distress. The authors poignantly illustrate the contrast between the desire to help and the challenges posed by the unpredictable nature of mental health conditions.

To effectively navigate these relationships, Burleton and Eby stress the importance of developing a strong foundation of empathy. They guide readers on how to cultivate empathy by encouraging them to educate themselves about the specific mental health issues their loved one faces. By understanding symptoms, treatment options, and triggers, caregivers can approach their loved ones with compassion and insight, rather than judgment or confusion.



Next, the chapter explores communication strategies that can bridge the gap between the two parties. The authors advise on creating a safe space where loved ones can express their struggles without fear of judgment. Techniques such as active listening, acknowledging feelings, and validating experiences are discussed as pivotal to fostering an environment of trust. The chapter offers practical examples of how to engage in these conversations, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a supportive tone and choosing the right moment to discuss sensitive topics.

Additionally, Burleton and Eby address the need for personal boundaries. Supporting someone who suffers from mental illness can be draining, and they remind readers that it is okay to prioritize one's own mental health. The authors provide guidance on how to set healthy boundaries that protect both the caregiver and the individual in distress. This balance is crucial to prevent caregiver burnout and to ensure that both parties can continue to engage in a meaningful relationship.

The chapter also tackles the inevitable conflicts that may arise in relationships marred by mental illness. The authors suggest that understanding the nature of these conflicts—the emotions of fear, confusion, and anger—can help both parties recognize that these are part of the healing journey. They encourage readers to focus on building problem-solving skills

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together, rather than allowing disagreements to exacerbate feelings of alienation or resentment.

Towards the end of the chapter, Burleton and Eby reflect on the potential for growth that can emerge from navigating these tumultuous waters. They highlight stories of relationships that have been strengthened through adversity, showcasing how love and support, when rooted in understanding and resilience, can indeed thrive even in the face of mental illness.

In conclusion, Chapter 2 of "What It Is" provides a comprehensive look at the importance of nurturing relationships with loved ones who suffer from mental illness. By promoting empathy, effective communication, boundary-setting, and conflict resolution, the authors provide readers with a toolkit to help them navigate the complexities of these relationships with grace and compassion.

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3. Chapter 3: The Role of Empathy in Healing and Support

In the healing journey of those affected by mental illness, the role of empathy emerges as a critical component not only for the individuals suffering from these conditions but also for their loved ones who strive to provide support. Empathy is more than just recognizing the pain of another; it involves actively engaging in understanding and validating their experiences. Within the pages of "What It Is" by Sarah Burleton and Tanya Eby, the authors delve into the profound effects that empathy can have on the healing process, highlighting its essential functions in fostering connection, understanding, and ultimately, recovery.

To understand the role of empathy in healing, it's important to first define what it encompasses. Empathy is often described as the ability to put oneself in another's shoes, to feel what they are feeling, and to grasp their emotional state without judgement. For individuals grappling with mental health challenges, having someone who can genuinely empathize can make a significant difference. It fosters an environment in which they feel seen, heard, and understood—elements crucial to aiding their recovery.

The authors illustrate several scenarios where empathetic support transforms patient experiences. For instance, a family member who listens without interruption or a friend who validates feelings rather than offering



unsolicited advice can create a safe space for the individual feeling overwhelmed by their mental health struggles. This non-judgmental space encourages open communication and allows the individual to express their thoughts and emotions freely, which is often the first step toward healing.

Empathy also plays a vital role in reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness commonly experienced by those with mental illness. The book emphasizes that mental health issues can create a chasm between affected individuals and their support systems, leading to further alienation. By practicing empathy, friends and family members bridge this gap, offering companionship and understanding that can counter feelings of despair. As noted by Burleton and Eby, simple gestures—such as being present during difficult times, remembering birthdays, or just checking in regularly—can convey messages of solidarity and compassion, reminding the individual that they are not alone.

Moreover, the chapter discusses the importance of self-empathy for caregivers and loved ones. Supporting someone with mental health concerns can be emotionally taxing, leaving caregivers at risk of burnout. The authors argue that when caregivers practice empathy towards themselves, they are better equipped to provide support. Acknowledging their own feelings of frustration or helplessness can help caregivers manage their emotional responses and maintain a balanced perspective. This dual approach of

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empathy for oneself and for the suffering individual enhances the dynamic of care, ensuring that the relationships remain strong and supportive, without the risk of resentment or exhaustion.

Throughout Chapter 3, Burleton and Eby provide practical examples and testimonies from those who have navigated the rocky waters of mental illness and support. These narratives reveal how empathy has fueled personal stories of resilience and recovery, showcasing its transformative power. The chapter concludes by asserting that fostering a culture of empathy requires not only personal commitment but also wider societal change. By elevating discussions around mental health to include empathy as a core value, communities can create an environment where healing is not only possible but encouraged.

In summary, the authors emphasize that empathy is not a passive sentiment but an active force that can catalyze healing and support. By cultivating empathy within ourselves and our relationships, we not only aid those struggling with mental illness but also contribute to a more compassionate and understanding world. The chapter serves as a reminder that in the battle against mental illness, empathy can emerge as a powerful ally—one that nurtures connections and fosters an environment where healing can flourish.



4. Chapter 4: Overcoming Stigma: How Society Views Mental Health

Chapter 4 of "What It Is" by Sarah Burleton and Tanya Eby addresses the pervasive stigma surrounding mental health, examining how societal perceptions can impact those living with mental illnesses. Stigma, defined as a mark of disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, quality, or person, manifests in various forms, often leading to significant barriers for individuals seeking help and achieving a sense of normalcy in their lives.

The authors explore the roots of stigma, noting how cultural beliefs, historical context, and media portrayals contribute to a negative perception of mental health issues. The historical depiction of mental illness as synonymous with weakness or danger continues to shape contemporary attitudes, often resulting in misunderstandings and bias. These outdated views can lead to discrimination in various areas, including the workplace, education, and within families, creating a cycle of isolation and fear for those affected.

The impact of stigma is profound. Burleton and Eby highlight the reasons individuals may avoid seeking treatment or disclosing their mental health struggles, fearing judgment or dismissal from peers and loved ones. This trepidation not only exacerbates feelings of loneliness and despair but also deters proactive engagement with available resources, thus prolonging their



suffering. The pressure to conform to societal expectations can force individuals to hide their struggles, which can hinder their recovery process.

However, the chapter also emphasizes the crucial role that conversations about mental health play in breaking down these barriers. By sharing personal experiences and normalizing discussions around mental health, society can begin to dismantle the stigma. The authors encourage readers to advocate for greater awareness and understanding, which involves challenging misconceptions and educating those around them.

Additionally, the book discusses the power of grassroots movements and public campaigns that work towards changing the narrative surrounding mental health. Initiatives that promote transparency and vulnerability not only provide support to those who suffer but also invite broader community participation in dialogues about mental wellness.

Burleton and Eby encourage individuals experiencing stigma to embrace their stories and find strength in their truth. Empowerment through education and communal support can pave the way for positive changes in societal views on mental health. They call for a collective effort to redefine what it means to deal with mental illness, emphasizing that it is not an individual failing but a prevalent issue that requires empathy and understanding from all corners of society.

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Ultimately, this chapter serves as a potent reminder of the importance of fostering a supportive environment where mental health can be discussed openly without fear of reprisal. Through compassion, education, and advocacy, society can begin to overcome stigma, allowing individuals to seek help and heal without the weight of judgment that often accompanies their struggles.

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5. Chapter 5: Practical Strategies for Managing Mental Health Challenges

Managing mental health challenges requires a multi-faceted approach that combines self-care, professional help, and community support. In this chapter, Burleton and Eby present practical strategies that can empower individuals to navigate their mental health journey more effectively.

One of the foundational strategies discussed is the importance of developing a routine. Establishing a daily structure can provide the stability that individuals with mental health challenges often need. Setting consistent wake-up and sleep times, allocating time for meals, and scheduling regular activities can help foster a sense of normalcy and control. A routine can include not only tasks but also scheduled relaxation and self-care activities, which are crucial for mental well-being.

Mindfulness and stress-reduction techniques are highlighted as essential tools for managing anxiety and intrusive thoughts. Practices such as meditation, yoga, and deep-breathing exercises can promote calmness and clarity. The authors emphasize how dedicating even a few minutes each day to mindfulness can significantly reduce stress levels and enhance emotional resilience.

Physical health is intricately linked to mental health, and the book discusses

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how regular exercise can become a vital component of an effective management strategy. Engaging in physical activities, whether through structured workouts or simple walks, releases endorphins, which can improve mood and reduce feelings of anxiety and depression. The authors encourage readers to find activities they enjoy, making it more likely they will incorporate movement into their daily lives.

Nutrition also plays a key role in mental health management. The authors recommend maintaining a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and healthy fats. Good nutrition not only supports physical health but can also contribute to better mood regulation. As such, individuals are encouraged to be mindful of their eating habits and consider how various foods affect their mental state.

In addition to self-care practices, Burleton and Eby stress the importance of seeking professional help when needed. Therapy, medication, and counseling can provide necessary guidance and support on the path to recovery. They encourage readers to identify the right type of professional support that suits their needs, whether it be through cognitive behavioral therapy, talk therapy, or alternative modalities.

Building a support network is another crucial strategy outlined in the chapter. Surrounding oneself with understanding and compassionate

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individuals can make a significant difference in managing mental health struggles. The authors advocate for reaching out to friends, family members, or support groups where experiences can be shared and understanding fostered. This sense of community can alleviate feelings of isolation and provide encouragement during difficult times.

Lastly, the authors underscore the power of advocacy and education. By learning more about mental health, individuals can empower themselves and others. Advocacy can take many forms, from participating in support groups to educating friends and family about mental health issues. This empowerment can also reduce stigma and foster a more supportive atmosphere for those in need.

In conclusion, Chapter 5 of "What It Is" offers readers a toolbox of practical strategies that can be tailored to individual needs. Through routines, mindfulness practices, physical health maintenance, professional help, building supportive networks, and advocacy, individuals can take proactive steps toward managing their mental health challenges effectively.

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6. Chapter 6: Finding Hope and Healing in a Complex Journey

In the journey through mental illness, hope and healing are not merely destinations, but rather a continuous process intertwined with the complexities of life itself. Chapter 6 of "What It Is" emphasizes the importance of recognizing that healing is an individual experience, shaped by personal circumstances, relationships, and resilience. The authors delve into the multifaceted nature of recovery, underscoring that it often involves embracing a unique blend of strategies, support systems, and self-discovery.

At its core, this chapter highlights the critical role of hope as a driving force in recovery. Hope instills a sense of purpose and motivation, propelling individuals to take proactive steps towards their healing. Burleton and Eby illustrate how cultivating hope can begin with small, achievable goals that build confidence and foster a sense of accomplishment. They advocate for the practice of setting realistic expectations, as this can empower those affected by mental illness to acknowledge their progress, no matter how incremental.

Furthermore, the authors discuss the therapeutic potential of storytelling in the process of healing. Sharing personal narratives can provide a space for catharsis, enabling individuals to express their struggles and triumphs in a supportive environment. This, they argue, not only fosters a sense of

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community but also breaks down barriers of isolation that often accompany mental health challenges. The act of storytelling can create connections with others who have similar experiences, reinforcing the idea that no one is truly alone in their journey.

Additionally, the chapter emphasizes the significance of self-compassion and understanding in the healing process. Burleton and Eby encourage readers to practice kindness towards themselves, to acknowledge their feelings without judgment, and to recognize that setbacks are a natural part of the journey. By adopting a compassionate mindset, individuals can develop resilience; they learn to navigate through difficult emotions with grace, ultimately allowing for deeper growth and understanding.

The authors also advocate for the importance of seeking professional help as part of the healing journey. They outline various avenues for support, including therapy, support groups, and medication, emphasizing that mental health is a spectrum and that seeking tailored support is crucial. Therapy, in particular, is presented as a safe haven where individuals can explore their thoughts and feelings in a constructive manner, guided by professionals equipped to offer insights and coping strategies.

Importantly, Chapter 6 addresses the collective aspect of healing. Mental health affects entire families and communities, not just individuals. The

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authors call for a supportive approach to healing that involves not only professionals and caregivers but also those who suffer from mental health issues. They encourage fostering environments where open dialogue is encouraged, where questions are welcomed, and where stigmas can be dismantled through education and awareness.

In conclusion, this chapter serves as a beacon of hope, emphasizing that while the journey through mental illness can be fraught with challenges, it is also filled with opportunities for growth and resilience. By nurturing hope, cultivating self-compassion, sharing experiences, and engaging with professional support systems, individuals can find their own paths to healing. Burleton and Eby leave readers with a profound message: the complexities of mental illness do not define one's potential for recovery; rather, they can enrich the narrative of hope and healing, leading to a more fulfilling life.

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5 Key Quotes of What It Is

1. "The hardest thing we will ever face is when we are forced to confront ourselves."
2. "Healing is not linear; it ebbs and flows, just as life does."
3. "Our past does not define us; it is merely a chapter in our story."
4. "The power of vulnerability is what connects us to others and ourselves."
5. "True strength lies in embracing our imperfections and learning from them."

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