



## Wide Awake and Dreaming: A Memoir

*Julie Flygare*

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## **Wide Awake and Dreaming: A Memoir** Julie Flygare

Julie Flygare was on an ambitious path to success, entering law school at age 22, when narcolepsy destroyed the neurological boundaries between dreaming and reality in her brain. She faced terrifying hallucinations, paralysis and excruciating sleepiness aspects of dream sleep taking place while wide awake.

Yet, narcolepsy was a wake-up call for Julie. Her illness propelled her onto a journey she never imagined from lying paralyzed on her apartment floor to dancing euphorically at a nightclub; from the classrooms of Harvard Medical School to the start line of the Boston Marathon.

*Wide Awake and Dreaming* is a revealing first-hand account of dreams gone wrong with narcolepsy. It s the brave story of one woman trampling over barriers and finding light in the darkest of circumstances.

## **Wide Awake and Dreaming: A Memoir Details**

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## **From Reader Review Wide Awake and Dreaming: A Memoir for online ebook**

### **Allison says**

I enjoyed this book, but left wanting more. It is clear that the author is not a writer, because she's constantly contradicting herself throughout the book...as often as saying something, and literally 2 pages later saying exactly the opposite. There are also loose ends everywhere..starts of stories that are never completed, random statements that are never fulfilled. If this is on purpose to showcase the mental tax of narcolepsy, brava; but I don't think that's the case. Much of this book is written as an advice column: life is too short! Be happy in your career! It seems like the author wanted to believe that's how she was living her life, so she clobbers the reader over the head with these sentiments. However, reading through the book, it's clear that she wasn't taking her own advice.

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### **Virginia Welch says**

What an interesting book. I always marvel at how people who suffer something awful can take their experience, and in the hands of a skilled writer, put forth a gripping story of the human spirit--even of victory.

Julie Flygare starts out her first year of law school accompanied by strange, disconcerting physical symptoms that worsen over time. Eventually she is diagnosed with narcolepsy with cataplexy, life-altering conditions that rob her of her strength, focus, confidence, social life, boyfriend, bodily control, career (though she establishes a new one), and, almost, her hope.

Ms. Flygare does some things very well. 1) She explains what narcolepsy is (invasive neurological disorder), and is not (funny sleeping condition, the stuff of jokes). 2) She gives a detailed account of a day in the life of a person with narcolepsy, horrific details that, if they don't evoke an empathetic reaction in the reader, then really, there's something wrong with you. 3) She does a heck of a job, just by writing this informative book, of educating the reader about the nature of the condition and its aftermath. All by itself that is her great gift to the world. I, for one, am grateful for the knowledge I gleaned from her book. It was all new to me, and it feels good to be no longer ignorant. I will never think of narcolepsy as a "funny" condition again.

Her writing is straightforward, easy to follow most of the time, and does its work as a memoir: beginning, middle, and end. I liked that. If you're going to learn about a dreaded physical condition, the most palatable way is in the form of a memoir that reads like a novel. However, she would have benefited by having her book read by a competent editor. There is language in the book about an editor, but at first glance it sounds like the editors were her friends. I am unclear about this. I do know that the book contains a number of spelling errors, typos, and multiple fuzzy sentences. I had to read them several times to catch their meanings. She is vague about some things that beg for explanation--things that a sharp editor would have caught. I would unhesitatingly give this book five stars had it been properly edited.

Nevertheless, this was an engaging, informative, touching read. I recommend it.

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## **Debbie says**

I am so grateful that Julie Flygare chose to be transparent about her journey. As a person with Narcolepsy, I felt so isolated and struggled with my self-confidence.

After reading Julie's story I realize I am one of 3 million who have their lives affected by this invisible chronic condition.

Narcolepsy has cost me a career that I reveled in, a normal social life, and has affected how others view me. I have been lucky enough to find a partner who recognizes when I have hit the wall. He recognizes that my frequent naps are not from laziness, but the compelling pull of my sleep attacks.

I had never been able to articulate the grainy, burning sensation in my eyes. I almost shouted for not when reading Julie's description of her symptoms.

Thank you, Julie Flygare for your crusade to raise awareness of Narcolepsy.

I only wish I had read this years ago.

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## **Ann Sciabarrasi says**

As a PWN, all I can say is that your book is a gift. I have had narcolepsy with cataplexy for as long as I can remember. I was not diagnosed until age 50, 10 years ago. After 50 years of being a "great sleeper" with a "trick knee" who drank 12-14 cups of coffee a day, I cried tears of joy on getting a diagnosis. This author captures so beautifully what life is like when you never know when your body will deceive you...when you have to plan every move to consider the what ifs. Julie Flygare's running of the marathon gives me renewed hope to pursue my dreams. This book should be read by everyone who loves someone with narcolepsy.

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## **Suzi says**

Julie eloquently and bravely describes life with a condition that is too often suffered in silence due to misperceptions of its nature and far-reaching effects on one's daily life. It is extremely difficult to communicate the experiences so common among people with narcolepsy to unaffected loved ones, and even healthcare providers...but Julie's book successfully accomplishes this and so much more. Bravo!

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## **Jill says**

Julie has laid out the narcoleptic experience from beginning to end. From mysterious symptoms, diagnosis, meds management, lost hope for a 'fix' to finding a way to best live with such a little-known disorder, Julie shows what it is like to live with narcolepsy.

Narcolepsy is so under diagnosed, that narcoleptics have trouble finding others to learn from and share experiences and non-affected people know little to nothing about it. This book is a wonderful source to hear

another's story as well as for non-affected persons to learn about such a fascinating disorder.

Julie writes a compelling story in plain language. A must read for sure!

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### **Emily says**

Julie Flygare does an amazing job of describing what it feels like to have narcolepsy, and the ways in which it rearranges and redefines one's life. She has always been extremely driven, but as she develops symptoms and is diagnosed with a "textbook" case of narcolepsy, she must come to terms with the fact she can no longer live the life she had envisioned for herself.

She doesn't sugarcoat her experiences, and she struggles a lot. She slowly realizes that she must figure out how to fit this diagnosis into her life. The way she gradually adjusts is both relatable and inspiring. Ultimately, she manages to put narcolepsy in a hopeful perspective. Her life will be different, but it will still be great.

Reading this book was cathartic for me as a person with narcolepsy. It gave words to feelings I haven't been able to express or fully understand. It also made me feel more hopeful, and less alone.

I would recommend this book to anyone who has narcolepsy, wants to better understand narcolepsy, or is simply intrigued by the premise of the book. It's a quick read that can teach you and inspire you.

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### **Kelley says**

I happened upon this book when visiting the Narcolepsy Network one day recently. I've long been a fan of memoirs (especially health-related), and years ago I searched far and wide for a book about narcolepsy. After a long and arduous search, I was finally diagnosed with narcolepsy with cataplexy in May of 2011. Oh, how I wish there had been a book like this back before I was diagnosed!

I have so many feelings for *Wide Awake and Dreaming* that it's hard to put them into words. Let me try to sum up why you should read this book, no matter who you are. This might be a bit verbose. I apologize.

#### **As a person with narcolepsy (with or without cataplexy)...**

This book will be a *welcome friend*. As Julie described her initial symptoms – cataplexy while laughing – I could easily relate. (That is how my symptoms began, too!) In reading this book, I experienced Julie's struggles with cataplexy, overwhelming sleepiness, sleep paralysis, and nightmares — all while she was fiercely working her way through law school. Reading about someone else's experiences and being able to relate to them so much was a really great experience. Having an illness like narcolepsy, which most people don't know much about, can make you feel pretty isolated. Being able to share these experiences with another person reminds you that you're not alone, and there are other people out there who know what you're going through.

#### **As a person struggling with undiagnosed sleep issues...**

This book will be a *guiding light*. When I was struggling with my sleep symptoms, I went to several doctors who tested me for many possible diagnoses. While one neurologist suspected nerve and muscle issues, my

mind kept going back to sleep issues. I researched like you wouldn't believe, and I searched and searched for a book about narcolepsy — just so I could see if I related to the symptoms. If only this book had been available back then! But at the time, Julie was still searching for her own diagnosis. Despite all of the fatigue, unsympathetic friends, and frustration, Julie persevered. Not only did she finish law school, but she found a doctor who would help her, and she got herself back up on two feet. Even if narcolepsy is not what you have, just reading about someone else's experiences with similar struggles is comforting, encouraging, and inspiring.

**As a person who knows/loves someone with narcolepsy (or other sleep issues)...**

This book will be a *gentle reminder*. While reading Julie's story, I was continually frustrated with her boyfriend, who seemed to have zero empathy and did not really care what she was going through (even if he did carry her to bed when she had cataplexy!). I was, however, very happy to learn that her father was so supportive. It was nice to see that even though he was her mentor and encouragement to finish law school, he didn't let that cloud his judgement. He always listened to her, supported her, and helped her through each ugly moment. One of my favorite parts of this book was when her dad and stepmother accompanied her to the Narcolepsy Network Conference. Because then, his eyes were opened. Then, he more fully understood her struggles, and the gravity of narcolepsy. Let him be an example of how to treat your loved one who has narcolepsy.

**As a person unfamiliar with sleep issues or people who have them...**

This book will be a *learning experience*. I've always enjoyed reading memoirs because you get to experience another person's life and memories at a very close perspective. Reading about the struggles someone has gone through not only teaches you about new things, but it lets you develop your empathy muscles! Aside from all that, this book was a flat-out interesting and inspiring read. It starts out as a mystery, and by the end of it you'll be cheering Julie on!

**So, should you read this book? I say, undoubtedly, yes.**

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**Mandi H says**

Amazing book. I love how she was able to get in depth about what she was seeing and feeling at the times of her blacks outs. She was able to describe her medicine and it was almost like you could taste it. This is a great book. Everyone should read this. I stayed up late several nights just to read this book. :)

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**Sherry says**

**Well written and insightful**

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It is inspiring that she shared her life story with strangers to bring light to a subject so misunderstood. Instead of turning bitter, she used her story to push herself to new limits. She is able to empathize with other PWN and give them hope.

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## Nehlia says

I couldn't wait to read this book because I, too, have narcolepsy and wanted to see if her story was like mine. I can relate to so many experiences shared in this book. Especially not doing as well in school as you feel you ought to be doing and not really knowing why. The frustrations and the misdiagnoses and the denial... All too familiar. She is very brave to share her experiences as a narcoleptic because this condition is emotionally taxing and life can be filled with so much shame and misunderstanding from others. I thank the author for being such a committed advocate for awareness and education. I hope others who read this will be more sympathetic to anyone suffering from a chronic illness.

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## Samantha says

kind of a hate read, if I'm honest. there is a woman with narcolepsy at my quaker meeting, and she loaned out some copies of books so people could educate themselves about the condition. I don't feel like I learned all that much about narcolepsy from the book though. it was very much one woman's experience - she says that other people experience different symptoms etc. but she doesn't really go into it. the woman at my meeting I know had a very different experience from her.

she's not a professional writer, and that is super evident. she puts in a lot of adjectives, but banal ones. "juicy oranges", "steaming mashed potatoes", "cozy living room". or they're not banal, she misses the nuance. they go for cannolis and take "ravenous bites". I think she uses ravenous somewhere else talking about eating too, where she's just excited about the food. it's too much. yes, I'm going to be petty in this review.

there were also points where I didn't understand what she was describing. when she falls forward on her legs from a standing position, is she bent at the waist but on her feet? is she sitting on the floor? there are several descriptions of cataplexy where I can't understand what position she's in.

or she contradicts herself. she talks about how great a party is for a page, then suddenly she says it was actually horrible.

but my main issue with the book is a big fat personality clash. we are super super different people and if we met in real life, we would probably just bounce off each other and have nothing to do with one another, but here I am reading her book, so I'm engaging with someone I usually wouldn't engage with because we are so unlike.

this is a privileged girl. well off family, everything has come easy to her. anything that is painful, like her parents getting divorced, she avoids. I am extremely introspective, I've kept a journal since high school. we just have very different styles. I am a processor. she is like omg pain, let me go for a run and forget it, let me put it out of my mind. I just found her extremely shallow. and some of that may be that she doesn't have the skills to write about her mental depths very well, or is being private. I don't know. but all through the book, she's a total daddy's girl. daddy is her hero, daddy is the lawyer whose footsteps she is walking in, she's his golden girl. she talks about him a LOT more than her mother - 3/4 through the book I was like, is she totally estranged from her mother? has she mentioned her at all? when she breaks up with someone or gets bad news, she calls her dad right away. then, near the end of the book, it starts to come out that daddy is stoic,

that daddy never talks about his feelings. he mostly seems to just say "everything will be ok, you'll rise above this challenge" and then she feels protected and understood. I was mystified as to how they are even close.

same thing with her boyfriend. she thinks this guy is cute, they get together. she starts experiencing narcolepsy symptoms, gets overwhelmed, calls him and breaks up with him. and that's it. he comes and they exchange belongings, end of story. except they do end up getting back together later, and then the shoe is on the other foot. she gets diagnosed with narcolepsy and has to take medication that requires him to wake her in the middle of the night, she can't drink anymore, she doesn't go out much. spoiler alert, he dumps her. she is mystified. also, this is apparently a huge nightmare, how can this happen? never mind she did the same thing to him before. but obviously the bond is not enough to overcome the strictures of her illness, and I'm not surprised, because I don't trust any of her bonds. she has a shit ton of friends, they are always showing up, suddenly here is emily or maya or jennifer, you've never heard of her before but she's a close friend from college and the author loves her so much. again, I don't know how much of this is that she's shallow and how much is that she just doesn't write well.

but literally. she suspects her boyfriend is coming over to break up with her. she packs his stuff. he breaks up with her. why? no! why? no! I packed your stuff. what? she is obsessed with appearances. one time pre-break up she has a splitting headache and it's a halloween party and she hides in her room and he comes in and says wtf come out and she's like, I can't deal, it's too overwhelming and he gets all cold and is like, they're YOUR friends out there. and instead of being like, well, I feel like shit, sorry, I'm sick, she is like omg he's right! I'm being terrible! like, she uses all this energy and energy to overcome on crap like going out on halloween. she feels guilty about leaving parties early. her idea of being there for her friends is showing up for events. even the fun she has annoys me. on her birthday she is on a harbor cruise with her friends in a hot pink dress just loving being the center of attention (that's not an inference, she says that). there are planes flying low over the harbor to land at the airport (btw, this is boston, that was my first tip off I wasn't going to like this, she LOVES boston. LOVES it. I consider it one of the world's most boring cities.) and she writes about how she "ever so slightly" leans back when they come over as if she's slipping under a limbo pole. later when she talks about it, it sounds more like she and her best friend are actually outright pretending to limbo under planes. which is fine, but "ever so slightly" doesn't convey that, and since she was drinking, I doubt there was anything subtle about it. she makes it sound like a private thing she's doing, and then later it was this moment of hilarity and bonding between her and her friend.

she is just privileged, and ambitious, and competitive. I feel like she fuels all this drive to succeed by society's standards by ignoring her inner life completely. all attention is outward. how does this appear to others. she is all ashamed when she has to pee in the woods by the side of the highway, which she describes as desperate and sketchy. who hasn't done that? it's all very "the show must go on". it feels very surface to me. no, when I was in college I didn't have 10 friends who wanted to dress up like miss america contestants for halloween with me. I don't know that I had one friend who would have wanted to dress up like a miss america contestant.

so, I think she was forced to shift gears with the narcolepsy. she appreciated the ease she had before now that it is gone. she had to talk about some awkward things, she saw her dad cry. there was never a moment when she says, god, I was living such a shallow life, worried about all the wrong things, caught up in surfaces and appearances and being the center of attention, but only as the leader of a pack, only because I was fitting in the best.

if someone you know has narcolepsy, or you are interested in narcolepsy, or you have narcolepsy, or you are a golden child and nothing bad has ever happened to thwart your dreams of a lucrative career and a mc mansion with 2 blond/e children and you are willing to consider that something could go wrong, go ahead



and read it. or if you are like me and you're looking for a hate read.

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### **Wendy P says**

Helping me understand a loved one.

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### **Gina says**

I was diagnosed with narcolepsy/cataplexy this last January - - - and I felt so lost to know how to grasp what this was going to mean in my life.

I was given the title of this book to read to learn more about my new normal from a person who is living life as a PWN/C.

This is one of the books that has literally changed my life. I am so thankful to have learned about it at a time when I was really needing a friend to come alongside me to tell me how to live (and still achieve my dreams) as a PWN/C!

I have been able to get to know Julie and have gained HOPE after reading of her experiences - - - I am also happy to say that I have made a friend and gained a tireless advocate for living with N/C in Julie the person, not just Julie the authoress.

All because of a book.

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### **Dottie says**

Made me really appreciate my daughter's struggles and our misguided reaction to her disease. When I look back at what she's been able to accomplish I'm humbled. Good job Julie for giving us a glimpse into the day to day struggles with narcolepsy and cataplexy. Enlightening and a must read for anyone hoping to understand this disease and it's toll on young lives.

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